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COMMONWEAL

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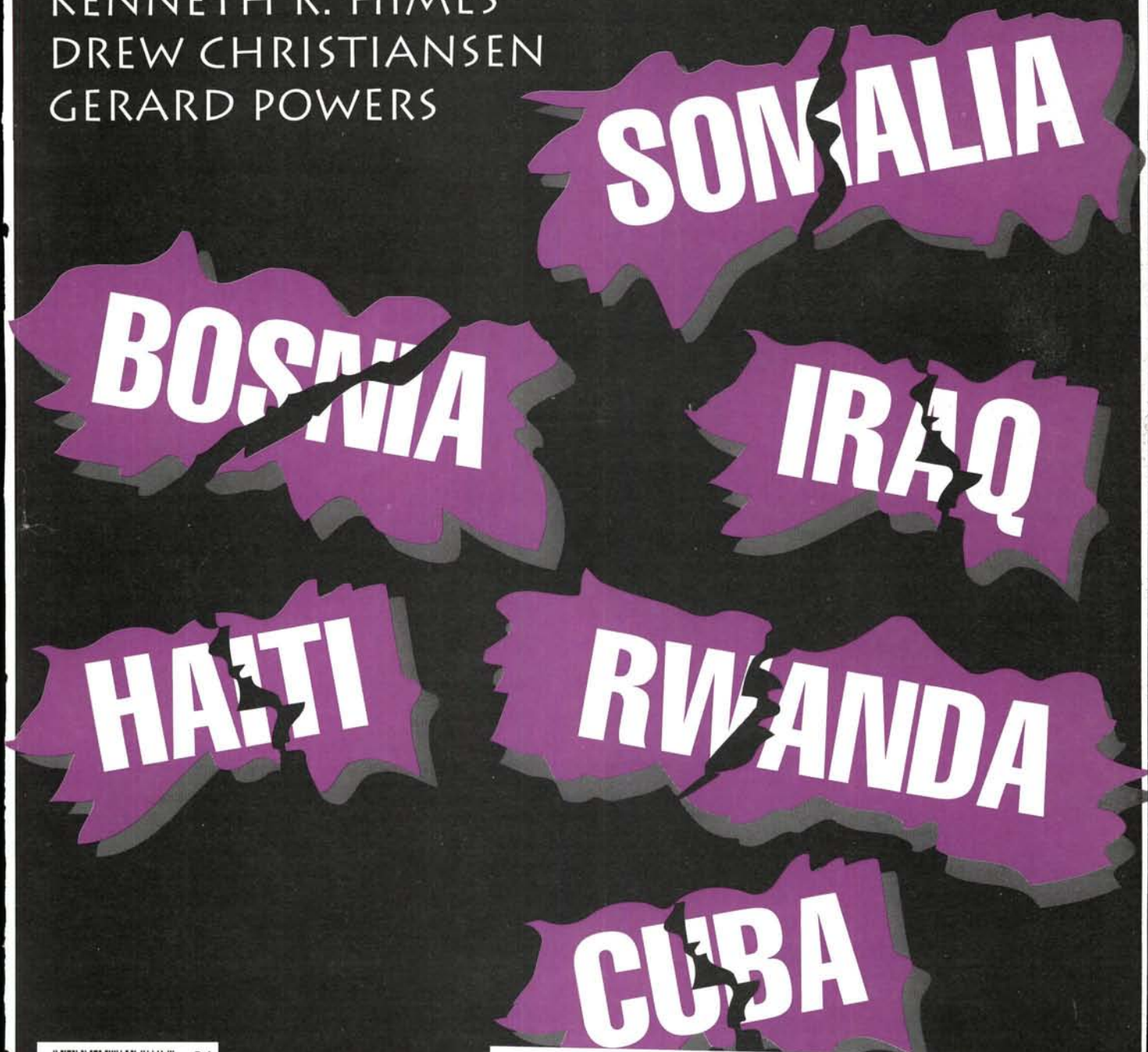

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To the Editors

The wit that refreshes

Besides all the other excellent qualities of your magazine, you have a refreshing sense of humor. The back-page announcements of the [then] coming tribute to Bob Hoyt, honoring him as "a famous monument of antiquity," were just one example—sketches and all! Congratulations to him and to all of you. Wish I could have joined you.

ERIC R. BUERMANN, O.S.B.
Humacao, Puerto Rico

Love that Bob

Although we have met, it is unlikely, Bob, that you would remember me. I was a student at Regis College in Denver from 1945-49. You were working at the *Register* and had a Catholic Action group called something after Blessed Martin de Pores. The Jesuits encouraged us to get involved in such things. In my case it was Father Stauffen. I attended with a couple of his counselees, Robert Tweedy and Bill Foley, whom you would be more likely to remember. I then attended Saint Thomas Seminary for two years where I got to know Jim Kettleson. I remember that one evening after the meeting you gave me a ride back to Regis.

In 1951 I joined the Trappists at Pecos, New Mexico. Later that monastery moved to Lafayette, Oregon. Before "leaving the world" I spent my last few dollars on subscriptions to your paper in Kansas City for people whom I thought needed it.

Later I heard that you had left the *NCR* and more recently noticed that you were writing for *Commonweal*. The notice on the back of a recent *Commonweal* announcing the celebration of your seventy-fifth birthday stirred the old memories once more. Those years at Regis and my brief foray into Catholic Action enabled me to handle Vatican II and its aftermath better than would have been possible otherwise.

So congratulations on your 75th birthday, and thanks for being part of my education back in the forties. May the celebration be a rewarding experience for you, and may your golden years be your best.

HOWARD CURTIS, O.C.S.O.
Lafayette, Oreg.

Editors note: The celebration held February 7 at the Fordham University Law School was indeed rewarding, and Senior Writer Bob Hoyt's golden years have been a great blessing to this magazine and all who know him.

He read the whole thing!

Congratulations on the January 31 issue of *Commonweal*, a remarkable piece of work from the editorial on Father Balasuriya to the superb material on Islam and the outstanding review of Richard Swinburne's new book. Nicely done!

GERALD J. WILLIAMS
Basking Ridge, N.J.

A gentle Christian

Readers of George Dardess's article (January 31) about the memorial service at the Abbey of the Genesee to honor our seven martyred brothers of Atlas Monastery in Algeria may wish to know more about that community, and in particular about its prior, Dom Christian de Chergé, whose testament Dardess found so moving.

The Atlas community of Trappists have long lived in a most delicate situation, not only because of the threat of violence from fundamentalist Islamic groups but also because of the constraints placed on all Christians in Algeria. It is to the honor of both the monks and their neighbors that, in spite of the limitations on their freedom to witness to the gospel, the monks had become not only accepted but loved and trusted by their neighbors, and even by people from more distant places. A principal reason given by the assassins for killing the monks was precisely that, though they took care not to proselytize directly, their obvious deep regard for what is best in Islam and their personal respect for the people among whom they chose to live began to alter perceptions of Christians and the teachings of Christ.

It was many years ago when I visited the monastery of Atlas, but already I experienced something of the Trappists' friendly relationships with the local villagers. From observing and talking with Brother Luc, who is one of the seven martyrs, I learned that sick people from many miles around visited his clinic, since he had the reputation of being a holy man as well as a good doctor. He told me how patient his patients were when he would announce they had to wait because it was time to pray the Divine Office. Once during the civil war he had been held as a hostage for ten long days, he told me, and since he suffered from a lung disorder he had as much as he could handle in surviving the ordeal. Yet he chose to remain at the monastery when it became clear that the lives of the monks were in danger.

Dom Christian, the prior, was a

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COMMONWEAL

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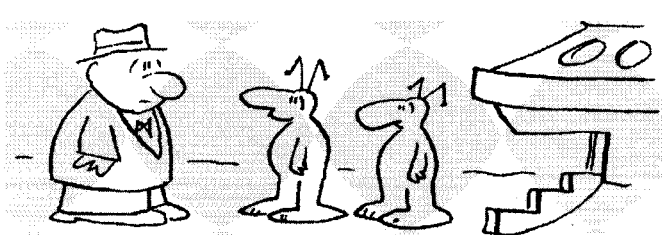

"Gosh, no—we were hoping you guys would know a way to end war and poverty on our planet!"

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friend of mine from the year he became the superior there. He told me of his special interest in the United States; it had to do with his descent from the daughter of Lafayette, who, along with his other children, had been given honorary and effective citizenship by the Founding Fathers of our country in appreciation of their father's services during the Revolution.

Dom Christian mentioned once that he had taken out Algerian citizenship (while retaining French) and took the name Abdul Lechay, meaning Servant of the Living. On another occasion he told me why he had decided to come to Algeria and to learn Arabic. During the Algerian war, in which he served as a French officer, he and a Muslim friend were ambushed, and the Muslim stepped in front of him to protect his life. Both managed to escape, but the same friend was assassinated a week later because he refused to betray Christian. That event, he said, caused him to live his own faith more deeply and finally to become a monk and volunteer for our monastery of Atlas. His warm personality and gift for friendship explain a great deal of the witness he and his community gave in Algeria.

For those who knew him well, Christian will live on as a loving memory of the transforming power of the Risen Lord, warmly human, gentle in manner, and unyielding in purpose.

ABBOT JOHN EUDES BAMBERGER, O.C.S.O.
Piffard, N.Y.

The writer is the superior of the Abbey of the Genesee.

Praying in Arabic

In his essay "Remembering the Martyrs" [January 31], George Dardess writes: "Arabic, to me, was a language in which one vocalized and chanted the verses of the Qu'ran. As a Christian, how was I to vocalize the Our Father when I had heard Arabic only in a Muslim context?"

It is important to know that Christianity, including the Catholic liturgy, is alive and well in many Arabic-speaking countries. In the Middle East, for example, Catholic and Orthodox churches are a part of the landscape in Jordan, Syria, Arab areas of Israel, and nascent Palestine. Egypt has many Coptic Christians, and Lebanon has Maronites and Melkites. Palestinian Catholics comprise indigenous Catholicism in the Holy Land. My young daughter's command of Arabic may be tenuous, but her Jordanian-American mother has taught her to recite the Hail Mary in Arabic with ease.

BRIEN KINKEL
Silver Spring, Md.

Monks meet monks

Rarely does one read such a balanced ecumenical statement as John W. Healey's recent letter to Sister Linda Julian ["When Christianity & Buddhism Meet," January 17]. It called up memories of what was experienced at Gethsemani in the last week of July 1996, when the Dalai Lama and twenty-five Buddhist monks came to the abbey for a week of interreligious dialogue with the same number of Christian monks, mostly Benedictines and Cistercians. The consensus following the week was one of greater mutual understanding of and respect for one another's traditions, and a call to enter more deeply into one's own.

Continuum Books is planning two volumes from the Gethsemani encounter, the one containing the papers that were presented and the other reporting the ensuing dialogues. The first volume should be available by fall.

PATRICK HART, O.C.S.O.
Trappist, Ky.

Reason & faith

A Protestant Christian, Richard Swinburne, breaks with his fideistic tradition of eschewing the purely natural power of reason in philosophy and writes books to provide arguments for the existence of God. A Catholic theologian, Robert J. Egan, S.J., reviewing Swinburne's work ["When Philosophers Talk about God," January 31], breaks with his own tradition of using philosophical reasoning and argument, and plays skeptical fideist toward Swinburne's arguments. Does ecumenism expect everyone to switch chairs?

Granted, analytical philosophy is only dimly aware of language as analogical, and its discourse about God is the flattest possible. But historical-critical study of the Bible is no less uninspiring. The function of these disciplines is not to produce faith but to lead those looking for God to him,

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Just say no

First the good news. Earlier this month the Republican leadership in Congress postponed bringing the Balanced-Budget Amendment to a vote in the Senate. The proposed amendment requires that the federal budget be balanced by the year 2002, or two years after the amendment has been ratified by the states, and would make it illegal for the government to spend more than it receives in revenues. It is essentially the same amendment passed by the House in 1995 but defeated by one vote (Mark Hatfield, R–Oreg.) in the Senate. The amendment stipulates that a three-fifths majority in Congress would be required to suspend the balanced-budget requirement.

The Republicans shelved the amendment because they did not have the supermajority (sixty votes in the Senate) needed for its passage. For the time being, the fate of the amendment evidently rests in the untested hands of four newly elected Democratic senators, all of whom have been carefully balancing their own political ledgers by hedging their bets between the proposal's considerable political appeal (polls show voters favor it by large margins) and its almost certain dire consequences and practical unworkability.

Now for the bad news: the amendment effort is far from dead. Balancing the federal budget was, of course, the rallying cry of the 1994 "revolution" that swept the Republicans to majority status in the House for the first time in more than forty years. Fiscal responsibility remains a resonant issue with the American electorate, whose own state governments are generally required to balance their budgets. (However, states do borrow for capital expenditures such as building roads and schools, something the constitutional amendment would not allow the federal government to do.) Moreover, there is a broad and disturbing political agenda behind the siren call of the Balanced-Budget Amendment. As the neoconservative Gertrude Himmelfarb has written (*Commentary*, February), "the 'devolution' of relief to the states is not merely a considerable move toward federalism....[but] a considerable step toward the abolition of relief as an entitlement." The rage for balanced budgets, in other words, is really a war on the idea of government's responsibility for the common good, and especially for the needy—a war being waged by fiscal strangulation.

Happily, Bob Dole's outspoken endorsement of the amendment fell largely on deaf ears in the 1996 presidential election. In the aftermath of the first Gingrich Congress, voters learned just how devastating to middle-class entitlements and domestic spending programs balancing the federal budget could be. Republicans, no less than Democrats, were quick to protect powerful special interests and popular federal programs in their home districts. As a consequence, the burden of spending cuts has unjustly fallen on the poor. By some measures, 90 percent of the recent reductions in federal spending has come at the expense of the least well-off. A balanced-budget amendment will mean the federal government's further abandonment of the poor and perhaps the end of federal investment for education, infrastructure, and public health and safety.

How Americans go about financing the necessary tasks of government at all levels is a complicated question with no one right answer. Excessive deficits can spell

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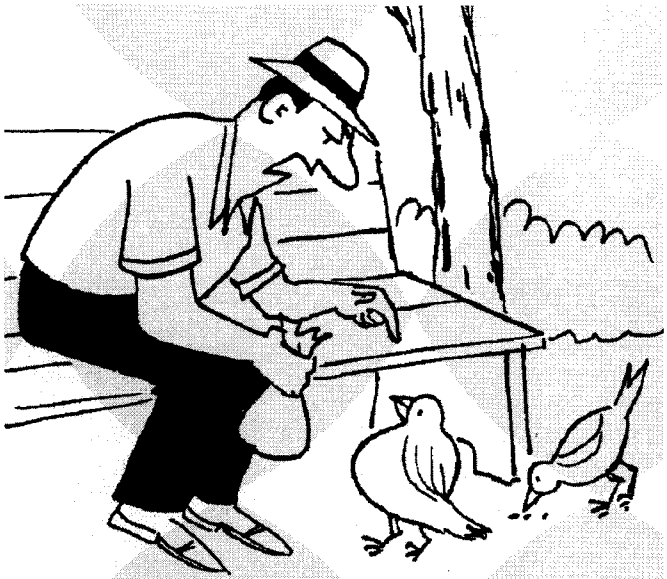

"I'm cutting you off for your own good."

economic trouble. But deficits are best understood when measured in relation to the size of the whole economy. Currently, the annual federal deficit is a very low 1.5 percent of GDP, and has fallen from $290 billion in 1992 to $107 billion in 1996. Yes, without further cuts in middle-class entitlements larger deficits loom in the near future as the baby-boom generation reaches retirement age (2010). But as the last four years of steady deficit reduction show, economic growth and fiscal discipline can manage the federal debt. With a little political courage and vision, spending for Social Security, Medicare, and the Defense Department can be controlled. Tinkering with the Constitution is entirely unwarranted.

Perhaps most worrisome, the Balanced-Budget Amendment effectively negates majority rule by placing the power of the purse in the hands of a minority: the mere two-fifths in either the House or Senate needed to defeat any future deficit spending. Proponents of the amendment argue that its severe restrictions are a sure check on fiscal irresponsibility. That is doubtful. The states routinely resort to the flimsiest bookkeeping schemes to balance their books, and in Congress both parties have indulged in similar sleight-of-hand. Moreover, increased federal spending for public relief and to spur the economy is essential during times of economic distress or national emergency. (Arguably it is just as essential as a mechanism for more equitably distributing the benefits of prosperity.) Yet the amendment makes the nation's best chance of overcoming economic or political calamity (think of the Great Depression and World War II) hostage to a minority.

And finally, if the amendment is implemented the ambiguities surrounding government accounting practices and even the meaning of words such as "revenues" would inevitably be contested in the courts, thus further judicializing our politics.

The procedures of majority rule are messy and certainly no guarantor of the truth, but historically they have proven a bulwark against fragmentation and tyranny. The Balanced-Budget Amendment threatens to unbalance the arrangement of countervailing powers at the heart of our democracy. It is a radical, not a conservative or a responsible proposal, and Americans should shun it.

ET CETERAS

OTHER THINGS ■ Richard Neuhaus, editor of the neoconservative journal *First Things*, recently chastised the editors of *Commonweal*, *America*, *Christianity Today*, and *Christian Century* for not practicing dialogue. He himself practices regularly: "We try to pay serious attention to their worlds." But do they pay attention to his? No, they do not. "Each of them...seems to plod along in its own track, maintaining an enclosed universe of discourse."

We have been chastised frequently by the editor of *First Things*. Like a good many others, we have come to think of Neuhaus's redoubt, "The Public Square," as more "The Public Scold." Yet this time, plodding along in our own narrow way, talking to ourselves, we lifted our heads at this plea for attention. Happily, in that very issue of *First Things* (February 1997), we found something very much worth talking about: Bishop James T. McHugh of Camden, New Jersey, reflects on "Catholics and the 1996 Election."

The bishop is unhappy that President Bill Clinton took 53 percent of the Catholic vote. He is critical not only of Catholic voters but of the election strategy of the bishops' conference. McHugh thinks that Catholics should "be identifiable in the electorate by voting patterns based on moral concerns, not on party membership or party loyalty. They should support candidates who display moral integrity and whose positions are consistent with Catholic moral concerns." The bishop's views may well reflect the frustrations of many bishops: their efforts to persuade Catholics to vote the church's moral teaching do not produce clear-cut results.

Bishop McHugh also criticizes the American bishops' 1995 statement on "Political Responsibility" for failing to be timely, for excessive length and generality, and for seeming to treat all issues equally. His conclusion: "For too long the Catholic bishops have been passive, withdrawn, or indirect in trying to give leadership." He calls for a message that is "clear, morally compelling, and unyielding."

Is the bishop's analysis right? Look at the 1996 campaign. He does not say that Bob Dole was to be preferred in 1996, though he favorably cites Sidney Callahan's *Commonweal* column (August 16, 1996) in which she declared her vote for Dole to protest Clinton's veto of the partial-birth abortion bill. But there were equally conscientious Catholics who, examining Dole's record, felt they had no choice but to vote for Clinton, as the lesser of two evils. And then there were Catholics who in the voting booth couldn't bring themselves to pull the lever for either major candidate. And finally there were those who simply stayed home on election day.

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If abortion is the defining moral concern for the bishop, was Dole really that much better than Clinton? Can the U.S. bishops truly be described as "passive, withdrawn, or indirect in their leadership"? Is there anyone who does not know where the bishops stand on abortion? They have made "clear and morally compelling" arguments. And who does not know where they stand on euthanasia, racism, care for the sick and dying, for the poor and elderly, for the immigrant and the homeless? Is it an "unyielding" message on abortion Bishop McHugh wants from his confrères? What would that sound like? The end of the regime? Bring down the government? Excommunicate Catholics who vote for candidates like Clinton?

In his comprehensive article in these pages on the Catholic vote (September 27, 1996), David Leege showed how complex, in generational and gender terms, the Catholic vote has become. Leege offered his sympathies and this advice to the bishops: "This has got to be maddening to the bishops; but they must continue to do what they do: offer thoughtful statements about religion and democracy and about the full-range of moral issues in the campaign, while avoiding even the appearance of partisanship."

Another thought for the bishops: Because the gender gap loomed so large in the '96 campaign, shouldn't the bishops try to find a way to talk to Catholic soccer moms?

THE NEARLY HOMELESS ▪ We regret (really regret!) to inform our faithful readers that little progress has been made in finding *Commonweal* new office space ["Evicted!" February 14]. We have several leads on possible new homes, but so far everything seems either too expensive or too, too expensive. We thank those who have come to our aid with advice, references, and moral support. We continue to need all three. Don't hesitate to call.

CORRECTION ▪ "Research News" in our January 31 "Et Cetera": Of 1.5 million Danish women in the study, 280,965 women had 370,715 abortions.

OF SEVERAL MINDS

JOHN GARVEY

GOD WILL WIPE AWAY OUR TEARS

But not before death has staked its claim

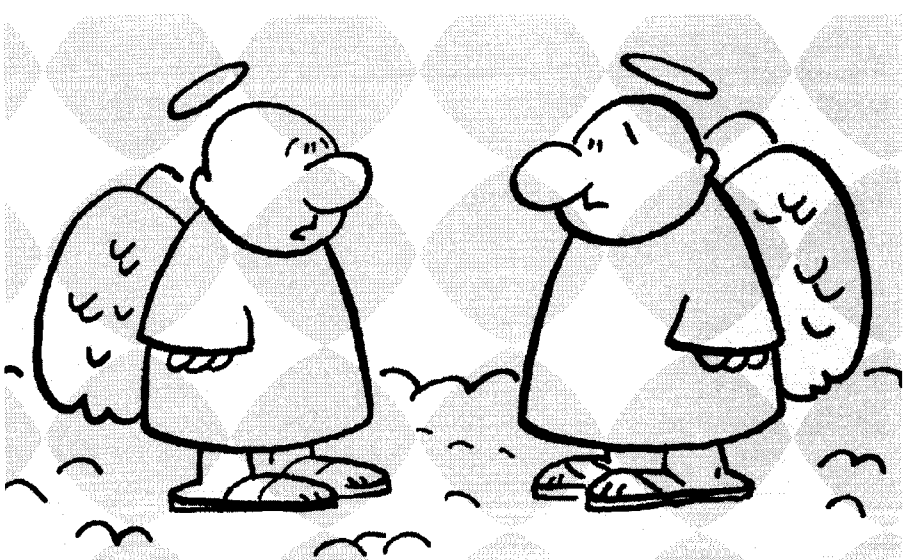
When I was in the seminary, one of our instructors said that if we hadn't come to terms with our own mortality and the meaning of death, we should consider some other line of work. What he meant was that much of what you do as a priest will involve you at a very personal level with death and the last stages of life, and with the grief of those who have loved (or have failed to love) the dying person.

I have thought of this often during the recent discussions of physician-assisted suicide. I oppose it, but I understand the feelings behind euthanasia, as misguided as they are. In part they involve compassion of a sort. But much more deeply, they involve fear.

The saddest thing I have to do as a pastor is visit nursing homes. The best of them are grim, unsettling places. The worst are circles in Dante's hell. Once I went to see an old woman. Her niece was with me. When we walked into her room, the old woman burst into tears. Although she is in her nineties and is physically infirm, her mind is good. She shares a floor with patients who suffer from extreme dementia, and their screams, their constantly repeated sentences and pleas, are torture for her.

Another parishioner, at another home, wept because he no longer lived with his family. He wanted to die, in part because of his loneliness for his living family, but also because he missed his dead relatives and believed he would be with them again after death. A few months later his mind had faded quite a bit; he lost track of sentences just begun. One day he told us, "I'm going to take a train ride soon." We asked what train that was, and he said, "The one my father rode." He died a few days later.

Part of the sadness we feel in such



"I think I'm going through a mid-death crisis."

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places is that we are confronted with a truth we usually manage to evade: each one of us is mortal, and for a great many of us death will be preceded by pain. The story of the Buddha tells us that his father, wanting to keep him in the palace, hid all distressing sights from his son. But when the Buddha encountered an ill man, a sick man, and a corpse, this confrontation with unavoidable suffering led him on his search for enlightenment.

We, however, send for Doctor Kevorkian. Euthanasia is, after all, a reasonable secular response to something truly terrible. But where this reason crumbles is in the way it responds instantly to fear. It is not only compassion for the sufferer that moves us to euthanasia. It is also our not being able to bear watching it. It hurts us to see someone suffer, in part because we know that we could suffer as well, and someday might. We want to end what is unavoidable and hard to watch.

This presupposes the meaninglessness of suffering. And it is easy to see why. Our culture sentimentalizes death. "Death is just a part of life." And how—the scariest part of all. But strictly speaking, this isn't true. Dying, which is often as bad as it seems to be, is part of life; death cancels life. But how to look for meaning in dying, in a suffering which can be all-consuming?

The point is that the difference between death and dying is infinite. The suffering involved in dying is what we must focus on, as a culture and as Christians. One point that must be stressed and is, thank God, increasingly appreciated is that it is not wrong to allow people to die. Another is that pain control is not currently as well understood as it should be by many people involved in the care of the dying. But this is still not the most important question: How do we find meaning here?

The terror of dying has to do with leaving everything we have known and everyone we love. We have no idea what awaits us. This is true of no other human reality. Jesus was "greatly distressed and troubled" at Gethsemane. Love leads us to want the other to *be*, and here we *are not*. It seems to cancel everything that we sense in a primordial way should be. Instead of reconciling us to this, Christianity agrees with that primordial sense. The world should not be a place of suffering and death; yet it is: "Death spread to all because all sinned" (Romans 5:12). We can distract ourselves from the tragedy of our condition, which is the agenda of our entire culture; or we can try to detach ourselves from it philosophically. But instead of detaching us from the suffering that contradicts our sense of the way the world should be, Christianity shows us that the love which calls us into being was shown most completely as flesh nailed to wood. The Resurrection begins here.

There is a wonderful passage in the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great:

> Descending through the Cross into hell—that he might fill all things with himself—he loosed the pangs of death. He arose on the third day, having made for all flesh a path to the resurrection from the dead, since it was not possible for the author of life to be a victim of corruption. So he became the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep, the first-born of the dead....

The cross, all suffering, is as horrible as it seems. But it is not evaded, by any of us. Even the most peaceful death takes someone beloved away from us. Our attempts to find meaning in suffering are not attempts to make suffering all right—it isn't—or meaningful in a way that serves us. It can't; it can only diminish and hurt us. To the extent that we see this as all, we have given the final victory to sin. But we have been promised that this slow cancellation is not the end or the point. We could not have learned without the revelation of Christ the full sadness of our condition, the depth of God's love, or the glory that has been promised. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS

SIDNEY CALLAHAN

LENGTHENING SHADOW

Will it be 'Pull up your socks' or Prozac?

Do you suffer from a "shadow syndrome" mental disorder? Say what? Shadow syndromes are identified as mild mental disorders by two psychiatrists, Doctors John J. Ratey and Catherine Johnson, in their new book *Shadow Syndromes* (Pantheon, $25.95). These forms of psychic distress and maladaption are viewed as "subthreshold syndromes"; that is, they are not full-blown enough to appear as designated mental disorders in the current 886-page *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV*. The *DSM* is published by the American Psychiatric Association in an attempt to reach consistency in diagnosing mental disorders. It serves as the bible-Baedeker for all mental-health workers, and the insurance companies who fund them.

Naturally, a proposal to employ new diagnostic labels is going to initiate fights and conflicts within psychology and psychiatry, a field almost as contentious as ethics and religion. Moreover, such a move will further provoke those critics who regularly decry "the triumph of the therapeutic" and the dominance of "psychological man" in American culture. If so many individual behaviors become psychological disorders, what then becomes of free will and moral responsibility?

Indeed, those afflicted with these shadow syndromes are told by Ratey to stop blaming themselves and to seek treatment. Medications, such as Prozac, and various forms of psychotherapy are claimed to be effective. Many more trou-

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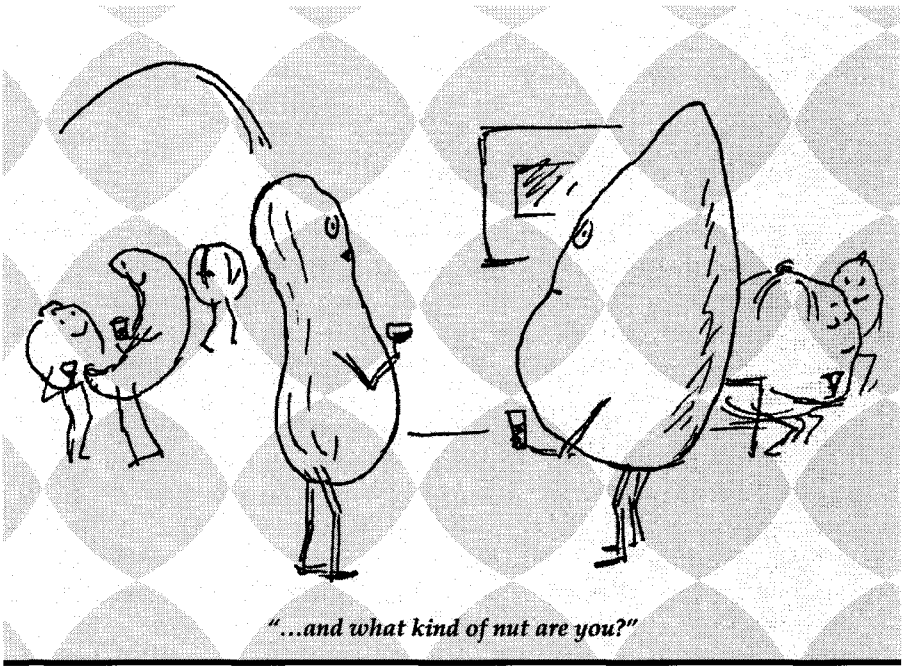
bled, and troublesome, individuals can now be helped to improve their lives rather than be seen as eccentrics or people with bad moral character. Yes, but does that remove the moral dimension entirely?

One of the most troubling examples of a shadow syndrome, for example, is the designation of a mild form of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. If you have never heard of ADD it is because the disorder has been so recently recognized and defined, especially as appearing in adults. From a moralist's point of view the diagnostic criteria for the full-blown syndrome given in the *DSM* include some rather suspect symptoms. Inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity have to be present for at least six months and to such a serious degree that they cause impairment. Included in the list of the symptoms are inattention to details, careless mistakes, losing things, forgetfulness, failure to follow through on instructions or to finish schoolwork, chores, or duties in the workplace, and (my favorite) "often avoids, dislikes, or is reluctant to engage in tasks that require sustained mental effort."

The *DSM* also helpfully notes that these symptoms of "inadequate self-application to tasks" often cause interpersonal conflict. Family relationships are often characterized by resentment and antagonism because families can be mistakenly led "to believe that all the troublesome behavior is willful." Yes, those living intimately with these people cannot get over the tendency to hold them morally accountable. Furthermore, most of us, in the course of moral socialization, have learned to see that the suffering and negative consequences associated with avoiding sustained effort in life are our just deserts for refusing to reform bad behavior.

If this fully recognized and diagnosed syndrome in the *DSM* gives us pause, the milder shadow syndrome will seem more suspect. Such adult sufferers are described as not finishing reports or other projects because they get so easily distracted. So much for will power, discipline, and the painful mastery of the virtue of perseverance in the growing-up process. Prozac and psychotherapy to the rescue.



"...and what kind of nut are you?"

Other objections to creating new categories and labels of mild mental disorders also can be mounted, in and out of the mental-health establishment. Does scientific empirical research really support giving new "brand names" to conditions that haven't been thoroughly tested? A disorder doesn't get listed in the constantly revised *DSM* without a great deal of research data and hundreds of hours of debate by professionals. Should shadow syndromes be so hastily accepted?

Another worry is that new categories will contribute to the overmedicalization of society, something that afflicts us already. I once read a hilarious spoof by a shrewd internist purporting to be a case study of "the last well person in America." When it comes to the much more subtle and vague continuums of mental health, could we ever discover anyone to be normal? Surely fewer eccentrics could claim their rights to be tolerated as oddballs.

Worse still, won't new labels stigmatize whole new groups of people, with bad consequences? Would a politician be bumped from a vice-presidential candidacy if he admitted to suffering from a "shadow syndrome"? Well, we see the social and moral problems involved in the relentless march of progress toward mental health; we could end up a nation with universal diagnoses and rampant dependence on an array of psychoactive drugs to alleviate mental distress. Moral responsibility would be defined as the willingness to hie thee to a therapist.

Yet in the end, despite my objections, I admit to being deeply conflicted over these issues. It becomes increasingly difficult to define the boundaries between psychological disorders and full moral responsibility. Still, how can I refuse to approve efforts to alleviate the human suffering that is associated with maladaptive, inadequate (or immoral) behavior? I can't. Furthermore, I accept the mounting evidence that many physical ills actually mask psychological disorders. Much physical distress also can be relieved by psychological treatment. Healing may come in many guises, and should it ever be resisted?

Could not Christ's commandment to "judge not" apply to much of what now looks like voluntary acts of moral irresponsibility? If we are prohibited from declaring that any sinner will be damned to hell for sure, perhaps we should cultivate equal tentativeness in moral-psychological matters. Which is the better exercise of charity and prudence: diagnosis or moral blame? God only knows. □

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Dorothy Jane Mills

BASHING BLACK ENGLISH

The pundits got Oakland wrong

Twenty-five years ago I published in this magazine an article on Black English explaining that the dialect, although socially stigmatized, is not merely careless speech; it has a definite structure, probably influenced by the languages that West Africans brought with them. The article ("Black Children, Black Speech," November 19, 1971) recommended that teachers recognize Black English as a nonstandard style of speech, learn the differences between the dialect and the standard, and teach the children the standard speech style without trying to denigrate the dialect.

The immediate response to my article was the same kind of furor caused by the Oakland School District's announcement in the fall of 1996 that its teachers planned to do this very thing. Critics ridiculed the Oakland plan, making unwarranted assumptions about it, and disparaged the teachers and the school system. Why? Because they seemed determined to misread the purpose and intent of the proposal, as well as the actual details of Oakland's curriculum requirements.

Newspaper columnists were the worst offenders. Despite vehement denials on Oakland's part, writers like Leonard Larsen of the Scripps Howard Syndicate (*see* the Massillon, Ohio, *Independent*, December 28, 1996) portrayed the school system as planning to teach the standard subjects—such as math and science—to Oakland's students by using the dialect instead of Standard English and to secure federal money to do it. In a syndicated column, Richard Cohen of the *Washington Post* ridiculed the notion that teachers need to learn anything about Black English in order to teach the standard to the children. Bill Maxwell of the *Saint Petersburg Times* decried "the foolish acceptance of Black English...as a distinct language," characterized the dialect as "a bastardization" with "few redeeming qualities," and concluded that the only way to combat its use was to do what his own teacher had done: embarrass those students who use the dialect. According to Maxwell, his teacher had informed students that dialect speakers were "murdering the English language"; her use of confrontation and sarcasm, Maxwell reported, "scared us to death." Cornelius "Pat" Cacho, who volunteers as a school advisor and grew up speaking the dialect, wrote that although he understood the "noble objective" behind Oakland's proposals, the latter had to be rejected because the program "recognizes Black English as a distinct language" (Naples, Florida, *Daily News*, January 19, 1997).

Armstrong Williams, a syndicated columnist and talk-show host, declared that "teachers should not learn slang or bad English, just like [*sic*] doctors should treat the patients and not contract the illness." Other columnists wrote that the Oakland schools were using the issue of black children's speech merely to get attention and money. Thomas Sowell decried "the self-serving fairy tales coming out of Oakland," and Mike Royko parodied Black English by writing an entire column in what he believed to be the dialect, ridiculing Oakland's program as a ploy for obtaining government money. Roger Hernandez of King Features Syndicate asserted that "teaching black kids proper English is secondary for proponents" of the Oakland plan and claimed that for the teachers "the actual teaching of proper English to kids who need to learn it seems not to matter much."

All these commentators might have avoided their mistakes by simply finding out what Oakland actually proposed. Securing and reading the plan is as simple as typing "Oakland" into a computer and getting a search engine to display it on-screen. It took me about a minute, even though I didn't know the title of the document, to locate a copy of the Oakland Unified School District's "Synopsis of the Adopted Policy on Standard American English Language Development." I found Oakland's web site at http://www.ousd.k12.ca.us/oakland.standard.html, and I printed the six pages of the synopsis in about two minutes. The site, I discovered, even provided an opportunity to respond with my own comments via e-mail at this address: erakstra@ousd.k12.ca.us. So I typed in my remarks and several days later received a courteous e-mail reply.

Oakland's plan is so far from what the commentators claim that the contrast is startling. First, it's clear from the plan that Oakland's goal is to bring African-American children's Standard English proficiency up to the same level as that enjoyed by children who come to school speaking the standard, so that black children can achieve academically at the same level. Second, Oakland understands that teachers need to know how the dialect differs from the standard so that they can better teach the standard. Third, Oakland plans to avoid insulting black children and their families. By avoiding ridicule of the dialect as "bad" or "sloppy" or "slang," the plan aims at inspiring students to reach a high degree of excellence in the standard. But you would never know any of this if you had read only the commentators cited above.

Oakland's e-mail statement also attempts to demolish the most common misperceptions about the plan: "The district is not teaching Ebonics," it states. What could be clearer? (After all, why teach kids what they already know?) As for the accusation that Oakland is using the issue in order to pilfer state and federal funds, the statement says that "nothing could be further from the truth." "All resources of the district," including "all categorical and general program funding," will be used to ensure mastery of the core curriculum by all students.

The commentators who criticized the Oakland plan were talking through their hats. They had not bothered to read the plan, just as they probably never bothered to consider the proposals I made twenty-five years ago about teaching

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Standard English to inner-city children. Maybe *they're* the ones who are using the issue to make money!

In mid-January, the Oakland school board, reacting to the criticisms, did clarify its original resolution. It had never intended, it said, to give the impression that black children's speech was a separate language, as Spanish and English are separate languages. If the original resolution had led the public to believe that the Oakland schools would require that core subjects be taught in Black English, that was never the plan's intention. Furthermore, the original resolution's description of black children's speech as "genetically based" had not meant to imply that there was a biological basis to such speech. Rather, the term had been intended to connote that Black English had its origins in long generations of shared speech patterns. And as reported in the *New York Times* (January 14, 1997), instead of referring to "black children's language," the new resolution uses the phrase "the language patterns they [black children] bring to school." The new statement also describes the program as pointing out the differences between Standard English and the dialect by noting "African Language Systems' principles" such as the omission of certain sounds and other grammatical features. In other words, children will be made aware of the particular differences between their speech and the standard, and they'll be required to learn to use the standard. Proficiency in English is still and always has been the goal.

Ironically, the headline on the *Times* story read not "Oakland Rewords Its Resolution on Black English" but "Oakland Scratches Plan to Teach Black English." As if Oakland had ever planned to teach Black English in the first place! Apparently, even those with a firm grasp of Standard English can get the story wrong. □

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Poor pedagogy

Teachers sometimes make the situation worse with their attitudes toward Black English. Typically, they view the children's speech as "bad English" characterized by "lazy pronunciation," "poor grammar," and "short, jagged words." One result of this attitude is poor mental health on the part of the pupils. A child is quick to grasp the feeling that while school speech is "good," his own speech is "bad," and that by extension he himself is somehow inadequate and without value. Some children react to this feeling by withdrawing; they stop talking entirely. Others develop the attitude of "F' get you, honky." In either case, the psychological results are devastating and lead straight to the dropout route.

It is hard for most teachers and middle-class Negro parents to accept the idea that Black English is not just "sloppy talk" but a dialect with a form and structure of its own. Even some eminent black educators think of it as "bad English grammar" with "slurred consonants" (Professor Nick Aaron Ford of Morgan State College in Baltimore) and "ghettoese" (Dr. Kenneth B. Clark, the prominent educational psychologist).

From "Black Children, Black Speech"
Commonweal, *November 19, 1971*

J. Patrick Dobel

KITCHENS & RIVERS

Metaphors for America

Americans are always trying to figure out who we are. The current battles over multiculturalism and identity politics simply extend that debate. Sometimes this never-ending renegotiation of American identity revolves around metaphors.

Our first such national identity metaphor was *E pluribus unum*. It drew from the poet Virgil's description of a wonderful salad where all the flavors blend into one. In the recent clamors over multiculturalism and identity politics, two metaphors have come to frame the debate: the melting pot and a mosaic. Each is useful but oversimplifies reality and has polarized the discussion. We need new metaphors that better capture the moral and social realities of American life.

The image of the melting pot, popular since the great European immigrations of the last century, suggests that whatever characteristics a given national or ethnic group brings to American life must be reduced by heat and melded into one gooey, indistinguishable mass society. We become a national stew where nothing remains of the original individual ingredients, and where distinct cultural identities are obliterated. Yet the metaphor nicely captures the dynamism of American life arising from the interactions of social and economic change. It hints at the passionate forces that simmer beneath everyday life, and it reminds us that born identities need not be forever: that we can come to share a new common destiny by virtue of physical proximity and a common environmental, economic, and political future.

America as mosaic has emerged as the preferred metaphor to the melting pot, especially for today's multiculturalists, identity politicians, and some communitarians. Its proponents argue that individuals come from distinct communities and that their differences deserve respect as constituent elements of the nation. Mosaics can stun with their beauty and their power: their collage of colors and textures yields a majesty greater than the sum of the individual tiles.

The attractiveness of this metaphor cannot conceal its problems, however. Each community or culture subsists in a com-

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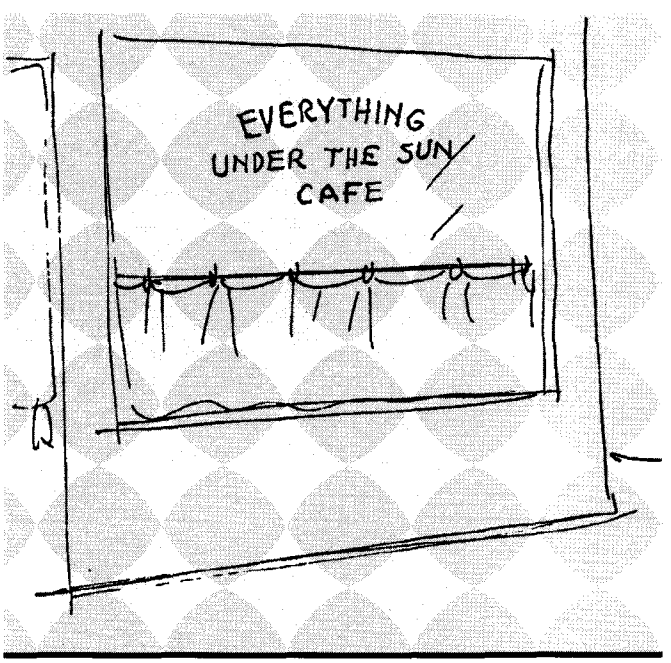
plex and larger, multihued composition, yet each remains a segregated unit, hard and impervious as the proverbial individual tile. Further, glazes seal off each stone from outside influences. Nothing common exists between individual segments except the rigid mortar that maintains their separation.

It is time to jettison *both* metaphors. For starters, I would suggest two others, each of which offers a better balance between the individual and the communal, and better reveals the joy, diversity, chaos, and order of American life. I am thinking of a Great Northwestern Halibut Taco and The Big Muddy River.

The first, in keeping with Virgil's insight, reminds us that the future of American identity lies in its kitchens. Two years ago I had dinner in a New York City restaurant that billed itself as Cuban-Italian-Chinese. The stir-fried rice tasted of Caribbean spices, Italian marinated chicken, and fried sesame oil. The food revealed a marvelous if impure mixture of flavors, identifiably Caribbean, Asian, Mediterranean, and profoundly American. In Seattle, where I now live, the food—we call it cuisine—melds many different cultures. One of my favorite dishes takes Alaskan halibut mingled with Italian garlic, Thai chili, and peanut sauce wrapped in a wholewheat tortilla with a side order of mixed greens using cilantro and romaine covered with honey Dijon dressing. Thailand, Italy, Mexico, France, Alaska all rolled into one American meal. American cuisine—with its hyphenated experimentation and concoction of enticing new combinations—represents a truer identity metaphor than the melting pot. The new creations I am thinking of offer tastes that are not only distinctive but pleasing because they cohere. Their achievement lies in the fact that their differences have not been obliterated but blended in juxtaposition.

Some might call this metaphor a recipe for mongrelization, even the ultimate debasement of distinctive national cultures. But to me the image captures something quintessential about American identity that emerges from the interaction of new tastes, colors, combinations, and textures, never before envisioned.



This also helps explain why the mosaic metaphor fails. That image implies that cultures and communities exist as static, self-contained, impervious units. Beneath this view lies the moral claim that personal identities should be determined by their culture. It enshrines a vision of individuals as embedded in groups, perpetually strangers to outsiders, who are bound only by the forced cement of proximity. In real life, people are *thrown* together. They work, mix, argue, love, fight, talk. And in many American families, love binds and connects despite differences in race, culture, religion, geography, income.

The kitchens of America reflect this reality. In homes across the land, millions of individual chefs experiment, cross boundaries, hybridize, create new dishes, and fashion new identities. An even more durable and noteworthy reality occurs when intrepid souls from various tribes meet, connect, love, form families, and raise children who represent new flavors, new possibilities. Think of it: Puerto Rican-Irish, Finnish-Filipinos, African-Poles, Jewish-Catholics, Mexican-Chinese, Methodist-Hindus. Each one forms new, evolving identities, not bound by molds, that would be unimaginable elsewhere.

My other metaphor has to do with rivers. Growing up in the Midwest, I watched the great Missouri as it flowed near my city. From high above, it resembled a broad brown expanse, meandering steadily through lush fields and past great cities. Up close, the Missouri is a river of rivers, formed by a concert of movement. It is filled with wide, deep currents of distinct hues, speeds, temperatures. Each time a new stream or tributary enters, the composition of the mainstream alters. Upon entering, some of the larger tributaries remain seemingly intact for hundreds of miles, yet even here the eventuality of change is manifest in subtle differentiations of color, temperature, speed. On the various channels' fluctuating boundaries, water molecules leach into the mainstream, changing its chemistry and altering their own. Some streams disappear quickly into the enveloping larger river; others form roiling eddies before finally joining in. And the river is replenished by rainfall from above, by runoff from fields and highways, and by subterranean springs. Still, it is one, ever changing, ever complex, constantly recasting itself.

Since we Americans lack the foundational bonds of race, blood, religion, geography, and even long-enduring political covenants, we need metaphors to help define ourselves. Our kitchens and rivers provide a key. They embrace the tension between community and individuality while underscoring the energy and openness of life. In them, we better become one. □

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WAR BY OTHER MEANS

Criteria for the use of economic sanctions

Kenneth R. Himes

The end of the cold war has presented American foreign policy with a paradoxical situation: As the remaining superpower, the United States can consider military intervention without great risk, yet in the absence of a clear threat to the nation most Americans are increasingly unwilling to support military intervention. Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia, each in its own way, illustrates the general uneasiness most U.S. citizens feel about sending troops abroad. Add to this sense of caution the desire of many people to support alternatives to armed conflict, among which is economic sanctions.

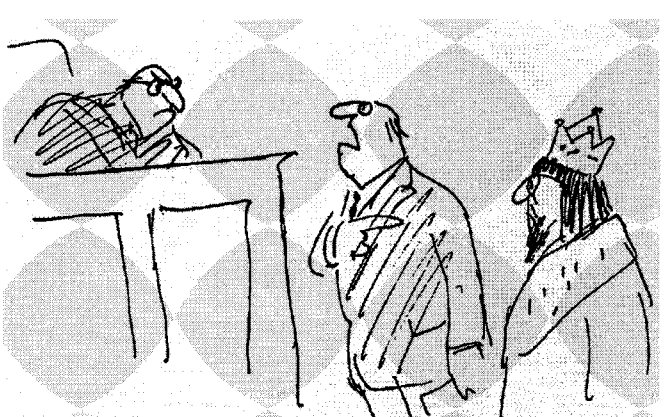
Economic sanctions are essentially efforts to influence a country's behavior by imposing economic penalties. They can take a variety of forms: imposing embargoes, barring financial transactions, freezing economic assets held abroad, and curtailing trade and foreign aid. Sanctions of one or other of these types have been imposed over the last several years on Cuba, Iraq, Serbia, Somalia, Libya, Haiti, and Cambodia, with mixed results, politically and morally. Compared to just-war criteria, however, economic sanctions have received little attention from moral analysts.

Pope John Paul II, for example, raised questions about the use of economic sanctions in an annual address to the diplomatic corps (*Origins*, January 19, 1995). He said that the embargo "is an instrument which needs to be used with great discernment, and it must be subjected to strict legal and ethical criteria." From the Vatican's perspective, sanctions often punish innocent people and therefore ought to be used sparingly and only as a temporary measure. The pope's remarks remind us that sanctions are subject to moral criteria, and that discernment is needed to apply them appropriately.

As a practical instrument for the conduct of international relations, sanctions have to be used selectively. They can be overused or ineffectively put forward as a way to resolve crises that are beyond the scope of what economic pressures can achieve. Thus, a 1992 General Accounting Office study done for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee examining the goals, process, and impact of economic sanctions found that, while sanctions can serve a variety of purposes, too little thought is given to specific goals and the means of accomplishing them ("Economic Sanctions: Effectiveness as Tools for Foreign Policy," GAO Document Distribution Center, NSIAD-92-106).

The GAO findings indicate that some goals are achievable (reaffirming international norms by punishment of violators or deterring potential violations by the threat of subsequent penalties), while others are not (bending the target nation's policies to suit the sanctioner's wishes). For example, in response to domestic pressures, leaders of the nation(s) imposing sanctions may overstate the goals of the sanctions in order to create an image that they are taking decisive action. But these inflated expectations can lead to the conclusion that sanctions in general are ineffective. When the embattled Carter administration imposed economic sanctions against the Soviet Union following the invasion of Afghanistan, it claimed that the sanctions would induce Soviet withdrawal. President Jimmy Carter wanted to appear bold in his public response, but no one in the administration seriously believed sanctions could end Soviet military action. Furthermore, unless the goals of the sanctions are clear, it may be difficult for the targeted nation to know what it must do to modify or remove them, or for the sanctioning nation to ascertain that the conditions have been met.

Sanctions take time. Their effects generally have to "trickle up." The poor and the powerless, rather than leaders and decision makers, usually feel the impact first. Thus a basic moral question is whether the sanctions will impose greater hardship than the conditions they seek to remedy. The more ruthless and authoritarian the rulers in the targeted coun-



"Don't we get a break, him being a king?"

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try, the more time will be needed for sanctions to have an impact on the elite. As in South Africa and Haiti, sanctions work better if there is a substantial domestic opposition to the government and if there are powerful classes or groups involved in international business who will feel the impact quickly.

Sanctions, therefore, should be calibrated. Imposing harsh and comprehensive sanctions from the outset can be a mistake since part of the force of sanctions is the threat of more to come; anticipated rather than actual damage to an economy can mobilize domestic critics to pressure a government to meet the sanction conditions.

Multilateral sanctions generally have more legitimacy and effectiveness than those unilaterally imposed. Consider the lack of influence of U.S. economic policies toward Cuba over three decades. For sanctions to be effective it is particularly critical that neighboring nation-states support them and that countries that share a common culture with the targeted nation join in the embargo; the sense of political isolation is then more sharply felt by the targeted nation, which increases the effectiveness of the economic pressure.

Sanctions can prove to be counterproductive. First, a nation whose citizenry sees itself as culturally threatened may interpret sanctions as further evidence of malicious international forces at work. When the sanctions fall harshly on the general populace, a "victim" culture can dig in to resist the sanctions rather than put pressure on the political leaders for change. Second, when a culture gives great weight to "saving face," the populace can become firmly united in opposition to the sanctioner rather than its own government. In both these situations, skillful political leaders can exploit the burdens imposed by sanctions to rally a people, particularly if there is a prior history of injustice or bad relations between the target nation and the imposing nation. Sanctions are then seen as one more instance of bullying behavior. Certainly this is part of the dynamic at work in Iraq.

Finally, the side-effects of sanctions can be seriously detrimental to the long-term economy of the targeted nation, leading to the destruction of resources, the flight of capital, the erosion of working families, the loss of small businesses, and the rise of a black market and corruption. The targeting nation or group of nations has an obligation to consider such consequences before applying sanctions. Particularly if the sanctions are imposed for human-rights violations, damage to the economic life and structures of a targeted nation must be considered carefully, for they could prove more harmful in the long run than the conditions that precipitated imposition of the sanctions.

The history and experience summed up in the GAO report make it clear that developing criteria for imposing sanctions is a moral and geopolitical necessity. For some, the temptation will be to see effectiveness as the only guideline, which means asking fairly narrow questions: Will sanctions be capably enforced, and will there be sufficient cooperation among the sanctioning states to ensure adequate compliance? And if there is compliance, will the impact on the target nation be sufficient to achieve the goal desired by those imposing the sanction?

Effectiveness is certainly an important criterion. But the legitimacy of sanctions cannot be reduced to this dimension alone, for sanctions implicitly express commitment to certain norms of international conduct, human rights, and nonaggression. Sanctions reinforce such norms by symbolically "punishing" those who violate them. During the 1980s, arguments for sanctions against Libya did not presume that they would end Colonel Khadaffi's support of terrorism. Rather, the sanctions were seen as an expression of revulsion. Thus, in some cases, sanctions may be imposed primarily to avoid complicity in an evil situation. This is the argument of those who want to ban trade with China because Chinese goods for export are produced under inhuman conditions. Sanctions can also have deterrent value since, even if they do not reverse the situation that occasioned them, their imposition may persuade other countries from joining in wrongful behavior or dissuade the wrongdoer from further harmful actions. These kinds of goals for sanctions are not easily measured by the single criterion of effectiveness.

The ethical component is an additional but essential factor in the debate over sanctions. This is the concern raised by the pope. Sanctions may be effective, but at what price to a population? Is a particular conflict sufficiently deadly and intractable to justify targeting an entire people? What responsibility, if any, do they share with the leaders of their government? If none, then must not sanctions be selective so as to minimize harm to innocent segments of a target nation? For policy makers as well as military planners and moralists there is an analogue here with the requirement to distinguish between combatants and noncombatants in war. As John Paul said in his address, sanctions are "an act of force," and current experience demonstrates that a policy of sanctions "inflicts grave hardships upon the people of the countries at which it is aimed." Indeed, after a March 1995 meeting with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, the Vatican secretary of state, said that sanctions "must not be used as a means of war or to punish a population." For all of these reasons, the criterion for sanctions cannot be reduced to the one of effectiveness.

What criteria then would help assess the moral legitimacy of imposing economic sanctions? I would like to propose seven. They are rooted in the moral criteria associated with the just-war theory.

1. Because sanctions can impose hardship and great suffering on innocent people, they ought not be employed without good reason, viz., clear and systematic acts of aggression or repression on the part of the offending nation. Debate about the continued use of sanctions by the United States against Cuba centers on this issue. Though Cuba may not be an exemplar of civil and political liberty, it is not an

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aggressor nation, nor is its human-rights record significantly worse than that of many other nations.

2. Less harmful ways of resolving the problem ought to be employed first, and the imposition of sanctions should not be seen as the end of diplomatic negotiations but as leverage in the negotiating process. Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said after the Aziz visit that sanctions "must always be accompanied by dialogue." From the Vatican's perspective, the UN-Iraq dialogue following UN sanctions on Iraq has not been adequate. There should be a serious political strategy accompanying sanctions, not just an open invitation to talk. Without real effort at a political solution, sanctions become not an instrument of diplomacy but a means of war by attrition.

3. The goal of the sanctions should be clearly stated so that the targeted government and the sanctioners both know what must be done to have the sanctions lifted. Clear goals also help to avoid the charge of ineffectiveness at home by those with unrealistic expectations of what sanctions can accomplish. Some of the Vatican's displeasure with the sanctions against Iraq has to do with policy shifts by the sanctioners. The sanctioners' statements have not always expressed their true aim, which is to depose Saddam Hussein.

4. Sanctions should be selective and aimed primarily at those responsible for the crisis. Discrimination is needed in targeting. Arms embargoes and seizure of foreign assets ought to be employed before imposing general or comprehensive trade embargoes. Sanctions that pressure a nation's elite who influence policy are to be preferred to undermining the well-being of the average citizen. To accomplish this, each situation requires discernment; what is appropriate in one case—an oil embargo—may not be so in another case. In any event, humanitarian concern requires that basic foodstuffs and medicines not be denied the general population.

5. A monitoring system to assess the effect of the sanctions should be instituted. Private groups may be better situated to provide this oversight than disputing governments. Perhaps human-rights groups, medical-emergency teams from neutral countries, the International Red Cross, Red Crescent, and similar organizations can be asked to provide on-site investigations to assess the consequences of the sanctions.

6. In those cases where sanctions are imposed for humanitarian or human-rights purposes, as in South Africa, there should be support for the sanction policy among those who are the victims of a regime's injustice. That is, within the targeted nation there ought to be substantial support for sanctions in order to determine whether the remedy is creating greater hardship than the original injustice. In extreme situations of governmental oppression and control where it is difficult to know what the general population thinks about sanctions, great care must be taken in designing them. Especially in these cases—selective, not comprehensive—sanctions, aimed at the ruling elite, are to be preferred.

7. Arguments for sanctions should be persuasive enough so that support for the policy is widespread, even if the actual imposition of the sanctions is carried out unilaterally or by only a few governments. Sanctions authorized by the United Nations or regional groups such as the Organization of American States should be the norm.

John Paul II has cautioned that, before imposing sanctions, "it is always imperative to foresee the humanitarian consequences." Although the case would be unusual, it is possible that a UN-authorized, multilateral, armed intervention might be less damaging to a country than a program of sanctions that cripples a nation's economy and causes greater or long-term hardship to innocent civilians. Consider this telling analogy of Lori Fisler Damrosch, professor of international law at Columbia University: We arrest and incarcerate criminals; we do not surround their homes and starve their families, especially if we know the family will starve first. Where an international organization like the UN can authorize an armed intervention in the manner of a domestic police force, quickly and effectively restoring order and apprehending the criminal element with little loss of life, there is an argument for choosing armed force over sanctions.

Still, despite their harmful consequences, sanctions are almost always less damaging for noncombatants and the environment than modern warfare. Sanctions do not pose the same dangers of escalation or irreversible miscalculation. They are ordinarily incremental and capable of being altered. In addition, use of armed force only as a last resort is a longstanding element of the just-war tradition.

Taken together, these considerations underscore the need to consider sanctions as an alternative to armed force. Undoubtedly this is the U.S. response to the Vatican on how best to deal with a regime like Iraq which refused to accept the conditions imposed upon it by the UN at the end of the Gulf War. With regard to Cuba, the U.S. stance seems less persuasive, since sanctions are not so much an alternative to military force as an ineffective means of punishing Castro while causing considerable hardship to the people of Cuba. In the case of Serbia, it appears that sanctions were the response of NATO nations that wanted to do something but were undecided about a more forceful policy or lacked the collective resolve to act more boldly.

The Vatican is suggesting that sanctions ought not to be thought of as easy remedies for complex international situations. From the pope's perspective, sanctions are "a means of exerting pressure on governments which have violated the international code of good conduct and of causing them to reconsider their choices." The pope does not doubt their legality or morality and feels sanctions can be a useful tool in the conduct of foreign policy in principle. What the pope points out, however, is that even sanctions require justification and should not be used as a blunt instrument in resolving international tensions. How then do we judge the use of sanctions in the case of Iraq, Cuba, or Serbia? Perhaps our answer will help better define our chance of designing and maintaining effective and morally tolerable sanctions. □

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SEND IN THE PEACEKEEPERS

Sovereignty isn't sacred

Drew Christiansen & Gerard Powers

During the cold war, when nuclear weapons were an overriding concern, much discussion on international ethics centered on the just-war stipulations regarding civilian immunity and proportionality. Since the end of the cold war, when a series of local conflicts have led to a number of humanitarian interventions by the international community, the ethical conversation has dwelt on the limits of national sovereignty and the justifications for possible intervention.

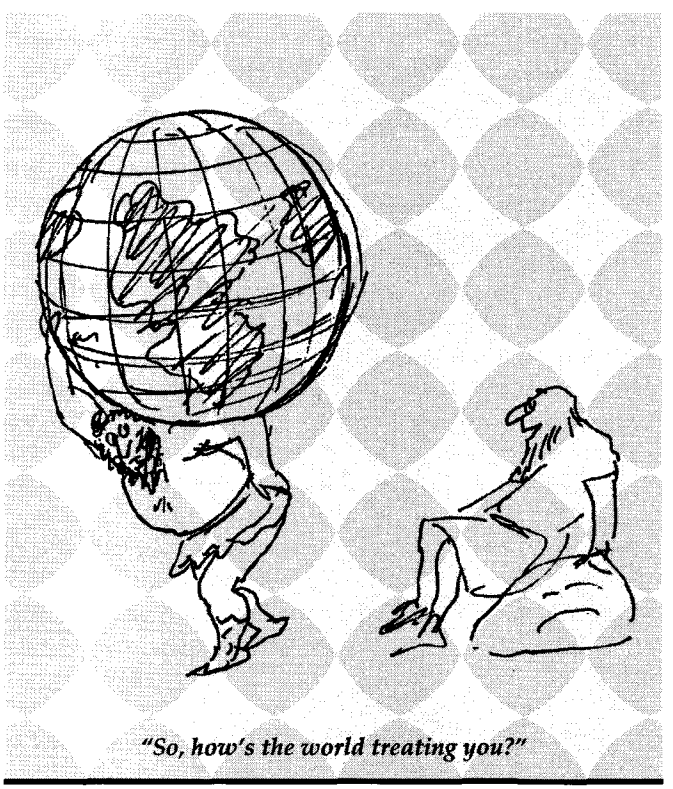
This change in focus is natural, given that the distinguishing feature of these recent interventions is their essentially humanitarian justification—to stop genocide, mass suffering, or widespread human-rights abuses. In the first post-cold war case, United States and Allied forces intervened in northern Iraq to feed and protect Kurds fleeing Iraqi troops after the Gulf War. Since then, UN or multinational forces have been sent to Somalia, Liberia, Rwanda, and Bosnia to establish conditions that allow humanitarian aid to reach populations threatened by state collapse, civil war, and genocide. Safe havens were created in Bosnia to protect civilian populations under siege, and U.S. troops were sent to Haiti to restore an elected government, staunch refugee flows, and further the process of democratization.

Pope John Paul II helped to define the fundamental grounds for intervention in his 1992 address to the International Nutrition Conference. He told the conferees, "Humanitarian intervention [is] obligatory where the survival of populations and entire ethnic groups is seriously compromised. This is a duty for nations and the international community."

While humanitarian intervention often is understood to involve the use of military force in the internal affairs of a nation without its consent, the pope uses the term more broadly to refer to a range of diplomatic, economic, and military responses to politically generated humanitarian crises. The pope's main concern is to counter indifference in the face of these crises by arguing that the international community has not only a right but a duty to intervene. When a state is not able or willing to defend the common good, defined in terms of basic human rights, it falls to third parties who can supply that protection. In these exceptional cases, human rights trump principles of sovereignty and nonintervention.

Critics of humanitarian intervention often see it as a kind of international social work, driven by heartrending TV images and political pressure from relief agencies, human-rights activists, and churches. On the other hand, spokespersons for the traditional driving forces of foreign policy, like business and national security interests, are put in the awkward position of explaining why stopping genocide in Rwanda and starvation in Somalia are not vital national interests. To a considerable degree, the critics are correct, at least about the pressures for humanitarian intervention. Humanitarian groups are often the new activists in international affairs, and it has frequently taken the foreign-policy elites a longer time to become convinced of the need for action in regional conflicts and humanitarian emergencies.

Humanitarian agencies, of course, are on the ground, among the suffering people in global hot spots: with refugees, the innocent casualties of war, the victims of genocide and ethnic cleansing, and populations suffering from famine. Their involvement with mass suffering gives those groups



"So, how's the world treating you?"

Drew Christiansen, S.J., *is director of the Office of International Justice and Peace of the U.S. Catholic Conference.* **Gerard Powers** *is its foreign-policy advisor.*

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a people-centered perspective on the unfolding of crises.

In addition, humanitarian agencies often share with human-rights, religious, and similar groups what some call a "cosmopolitan" approach to international affairs. By that they mean a view of international politics which, at least in some circumstances, gives greater weight to human rights and the fate of people than to the prerogatives and interests of states and the customary routines of statecraft.

The Catholic church has long held such a cosmopolitan view of international relations. More than thirty years ago Pope John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in terris* recognized the limits of traditional statecraft for meeting the needs of the human family. The encyclical identified the common good as the end of politics, and the global common good as the goal of international relations. It noted, even then, a need to establish political institutions to meet the crises that existing international arrangements, long held hostage to concerns of sovereignty and competing national interests, could not.

Pope John Paul II's admonition to the diplomatic corps in his 1993 address that "there is no right to indifference" when whole populations are at risk upholds the same view of international politics. Since the pope is known for his reluctance to endorse the use of force and his praise of the practitioners of nonviolence, the Holy See's calls for international action in Bosnia and Rwanda have served to illuminate his thinking about the restricted, but nonetheless morally imperative conditions under which intervention may and ought to take place and limited force may be employed.

The succession of humanitarian interventions over the last several years, with the consequent curtailing of a strong doctrine of sovereignty, has given cosmopolitan views of international affairs a new persuasiveness. Of course international policy decisions will continue to balance state-based and cosmopolitan considerations. For that reason, the international community is still trying to find a better way to respond to humanitarian emergencies.

Each emergency, and each stage in each emergency, results in its own *ad-hoc* solutions. In Bosnia alone, a whole array of international bodies are at work on a plethora of tasks: the NATO-led implementation force does peacekeeping, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees handles refugee questions, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe supervises elections, the World Bank handles reconstruction, the Office of the High Representative oversees civilian aspects of the Dayton accords, and so on.

Humanitarian intervention, despite its obvious shortcomings, has become a reality. The older prohibitions and inhibitions against intervention are increasingly overridden. A set of justifications for intervention has been advanced and tested, and in some cases these considerations have led to action. The moral question is no longer, "Is it ever permissible to intervene in another country?"; nor is it "What conditions, if any, justify intervention?" With the experience of several interventions behind us, the moral question is one of means, or more precisely, the linkage between ends and means. In other words, what means are permissible to use with what policy goal?

While debate usually takes place over the use of troops and less often over the application of sanctions, intervention takes place in many forms. It can be intrusive but nonviolent, as in Operation Lifeline Sudan, which for many years provided emergency relief to civilian populations in the Sudanese civil war against the wishes of the recognized local authorities. It can take the form of civilian measures such as election monitors in Serbia provided by the European Community. Even private, voluntary groups may intervene in this way, as Witness for Peace did with its encampments in Central America.

Governments may intervene by coercive but nonmilitary means. Such coercive diplomacy includes the suspension of aid, denial of credit, boycotting of international events, suspension from membership in international organizations, and arms embargoes. The pre-eminent tool in coercive diplomacy, of course, is economic sanctions (*see* Himes, page 13).

Even military options need not involve the active use of

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Lee Oser
The Spell

Old trucks and blackberries,
Tracks and flutes of grass,
A boy among them on a bike
Laughing through buckteeth.

The steeple broods
Like a pregnant man
Where spurred by summer
He slips its gaze

And glides straight through
The lock-step crowd
As if earth herself
Had shrouded him.

Peals of rainfall
Swell from the streetpipes;
Underground the sewers
Debouch on the narrow creek.

Spun from a wheel
A spray of gravel
Glimmers in whiteblack
Drops. He crosses

And casually loops
Script e's and l's
Down to the school
In which time seems to sleep.

Stone cuts the beveled sky;
A fence infolds a field;
Silence mirrors silence
Rising in a wave.

He vaults the curb
In a devil of wind
To see the bike sail
On the curtained glass;

Splits from himself
Where the blacktop's smooth
Then stops and turns
Toward his mother's house.

Unblinking eyes ascend
From earth on shadow wings;
Roses blur in sunlight;
The bodiless air rings.

force. Peacekeeping troops, with the consent of the warring parties, monitor the cease-fire lines and oversee demilitarization. Of course, a decisive moral threshold is crossed when moving from peacekeeping missions to those that call for limited use of force. Protective engagement, for example, uses troops to establish and maintain civilian safe havens and to protect aid convoys and refugee columns. In postconflict situations, troops may be used to protect returning refugees, prevent renewed ethnic strife, and ensure peaceful elections. Protective engagement may be seen as a form of international policing.

Finally, two other forms of military intervention, deterrence and peace enforcement, involve a willingness to be involved in large-scale war fighting. The United Nations force in Macedonia, for example, is intended to constitute a deterrent against expansion of ethnic conflict in the Balkans. Peace enforcement, the strongest form of intervention, involves full-scale military invasion to impose a solution, as the United States threatened to do in Haiti in 1994.

In the light of several years' experience with UN-backed interventions, the pressing moral question now is not so much whether to intervene but how. Let us concede that, where genocide is threatened, large-scale military intervention may be justified. In such cases, more limited interventions, such as establishing "safe havens" in Bosnia that are protected only by impartial peacekeepers, may fail morally because though the ends are legitimate, the means are not adequate to achieve them. Haiti is a different kind of case. Some form of intervention was justified to restore the democratically elected government and to stop human-rights abuses, but was *military* intervention justified? In a country that lacks democratic traditions and where human-rights abuses do not rise to the level of genocide, should intervention be limited to lesser means, such as economic and political sanctions?

Similarly, are comprehensive economic sanctions warranted in efforts to overthrow dictators of desperately poor nations, such as Saddam Hussein or Fidel Castro? Might there not be a threshold, even among types of sanctions, such that selective sanctions may be justified but comprehensive ones, adversely affecting an already severely needy population, may be morally unacceptable?

Questions may even be posed to private actors. Does the involvement of relief organizations in certain types of civil wars demand the suspension of aid? Relief organizations in Liberia, where there has been on-again, off-again civil war, came to that conclusion last year.

In short, humanitarian intervention takes myriad forms. A few cases, like the prevention of genocide, may demand the use of military force when other means fail. But, in this era of humanitarian emergencies, policymakers, ethicists, and opinion makers need to make more careful examination of the appropriateness of the means they recommend to the ends they pursue. □

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Richard Alleva

HENRY & JANE

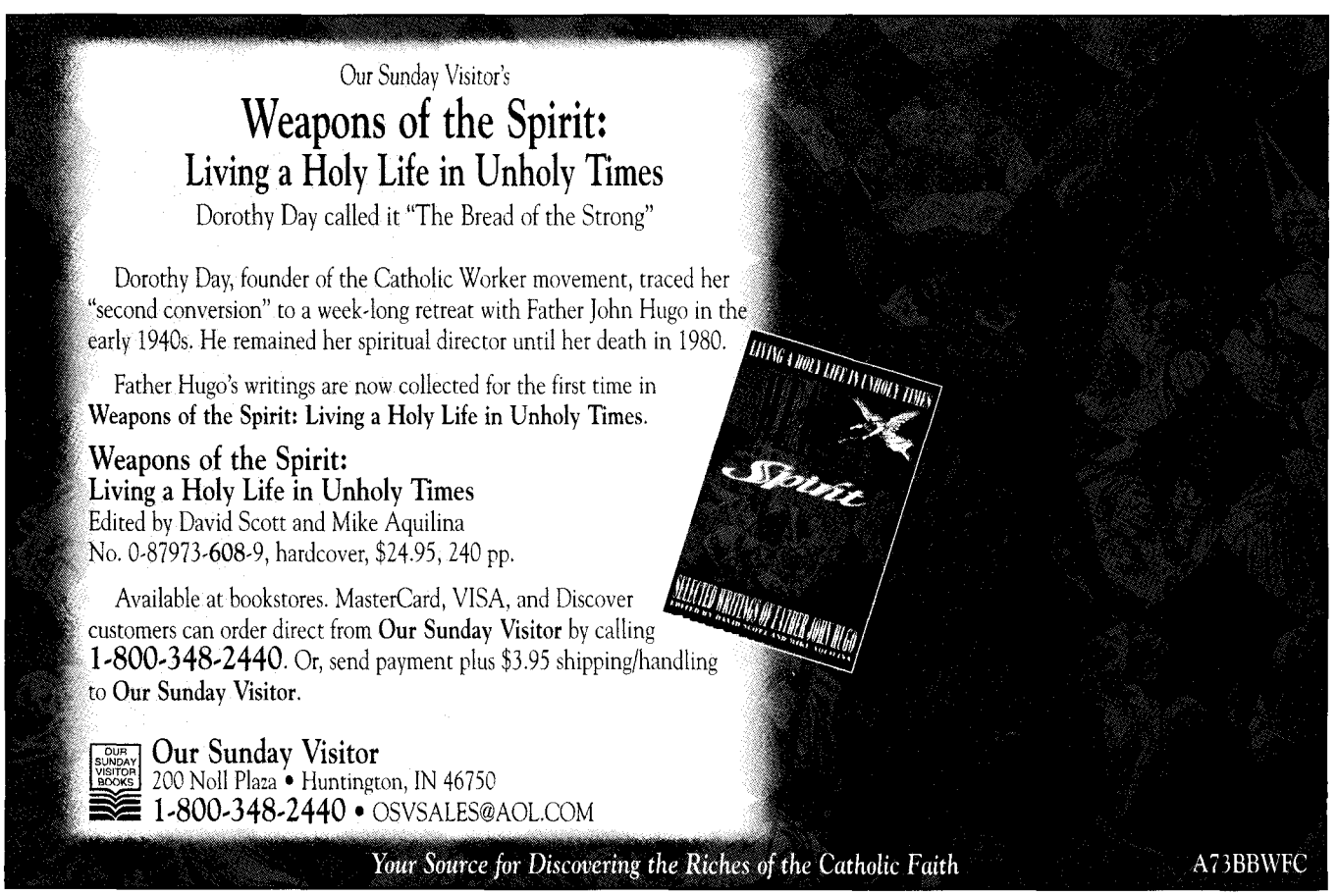
Campion's 'The Portrait of a Lady'

With her film version of *The Portrait of a Lady*, Jane Campion doesn't just adapt Henry James. She refutes him. But it's a generous refutation which, on the whole, plays fair with the material. The novel isn't jazzed up or sent up. In some ways Campion's dreamy, subaqueous style is a good equivalent of James's prose, though she lacks his deadpan sarcasm. Campion honorably works to realize the drama of the novel even as she shapes it to her own ends. However, by the end of the movie, those ends take their toll on the material.

The script by Laura Jones is a model of concise faithfulness. The plot isn't dumbed down but merely trimmed for dramatic litheness. An American heiress of the 1870s, Isabel Archer, embarks on a voyage of self-discovery in Europe. Rejecting two eminently worthy suitors, she marries the ultra-refined Gilbert Osmond, discovers him to be a fortune hunter, honorably thwarts his plan to marry off his daughter (by a previous marriage) to the British lord who was once Isabel's own suitor, and further enrages her spouse by speeding to the bedside of a man he despises, her soulmate Ralph Touchett. After Ralph's funeral, Isabel must confront another of her former beaux and decide whether or not to return to Gilbert. The scenarist makes a mostly shrewd selection of those scenes that carry the main action. She adroitly links them with her own (minor) inventions, and tactfully clips James's luxuriant dialogues just enough to make them playable. She also knows when to leave well enough alone. Isabel's greeting to a suitor, "I can't tell you how I hoped you wouldn't come," is the greatest courtship quencher since Elizabeth Bennet told off Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*. The line's author is James, not Jones; but Jones had the wit to leave it in.

Campion has mounted most of the script with panache and point. One memorable instance: Gilbert's daughter Pansy smiles warmly, even encouragingly, as an impecunious lover pleads his cause at a ball, but a close-up shows us that the girl's hands are treating the silver tea service with as much solicitude as her lover's feelings. She is her father's daughter and will obey him. That close-up is worth a thousand Jamesian words.

But there are also lapses. Staging Isabel's tour of the Near East as a silent movie travelogue comes across as unfunny camp. (That the "silent" movie has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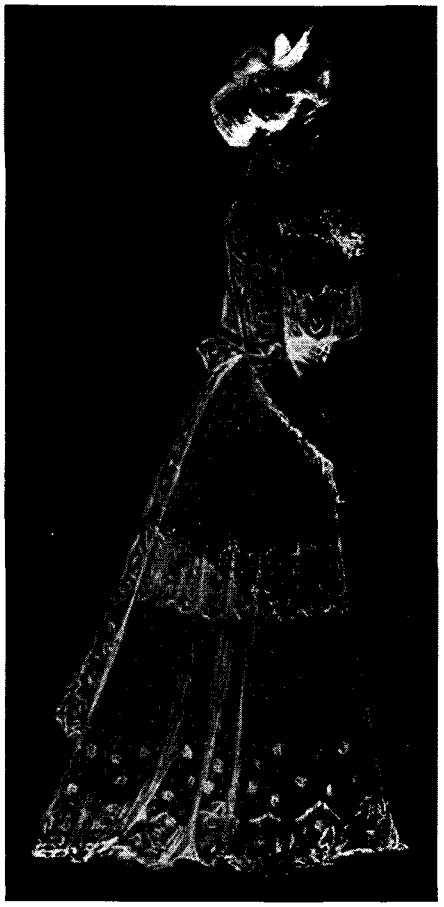
dialogue makes it doubly anachronistic.) Late in the film, when the disenchanted Isabel enters her husband's Roman mansion, the doors clang behind her like prison gates. Thanks, we get the point. But, more often, the director's visual solutions work, and I loved the way the close-ups and two-shots (photography by Stuart Dryburgh) seem to float up out of the haze of cafés and parlors as if the buzzing world were being shut out while we eavesdropped on these intimately conversing souls.

The film's relatively overt violence and sexuality will put off strict Jamesians, but I felt that Campion employed just the right dosage of sensation in particular instances to elucidate the quality of a person or relationship. The nature of Gilbert's tie to Madam Merle is made explicit but not by exposed flesh or heads denting a pillow. Gilbert's assault on his wife for her supposed treachery, strictly verbal in the book, is here physically violent, but it's the right degree of violence: no split lips or black eyes, but Gilbert lifting Isabel like a sulky child onto piled cushions, followed by smacking her hands (Daddy knows best). Greater abuse follows and Isabel is sent sprawling to the floor. But Gilbert doesn't push or punch; he simply steps on the hem of her skirt. The fastidious brutality of the man is in that maneuver.

The quality of the acting ranges wildly. John Malkovich's Gilbert may be too unrelievedly saturnine, yet critic Stanley Kauffman was right to note that Malkovich captures Gilbert's "almost disinterested viciousness." The most praised performance, Barbara Hershey's Madam Merle, seemed to me a thing of sufficient sexual glamour somewhat marred by unincisive diction. In the supporting cast, three performances are perfect: John Gielgud's brief turn is winter sunlight. Christian Bales is delightfully ardent and silly as Pansy's suitor, the silliness undercutting the ardency, the ardency mitigating the silliness. And Pansy herself is miraculously realized by a new face (and what a face!): Valentina Cervi, fetchingly candid, maddeningly placid.

And now we come to the big headache of the movie: Nicole Kidman as Isabel



Archer. That's not an insult, just a description. Kidman, from start to finish, looks as if she were suffering from migraine. Sixty-odd scenes of migraine, 150 minutes of migraine. Migraine when she is erotically daydreaming, when she is weighing moral considerations, when she is being kissed, when she is contemplating a bit of dessert. I once considered Kidman an adequate lightweight actress. No more. Any actor who can come close to wrecking an entire movie strictly with the force of her glumness is a major talent, a heavyweight drag.

Buy why did Campion not only allow this performance but abet it with an Elsa Lanchester/Bride of Frankenstein hairdo, blue-green filters on the camera, and almost no variation in the delivery of dialogue? Here we come to the nub of the movie and why it's a refutation of James even as it adapts his tale with considerable skill.

Jane Campion may be known as a feminist but she is above all a Lawrentian (*see Commonweal*, January 14, 1996). In her world, as in D.H. Lawrence's, a powerful, healthy sexuality is the concomitant of abiding love and mental health. The invalid Ralph Touchette can certainly love but is on his way to the boneyard. It is the handsome American suitor Goodwood whom Campion has plainly designated as Isabel's true bed- and soulmate. Isabel's surrender to Gilbert is a form of perversion.

In Henry James's novel, honor, not sexual fulfillment or even true love, is the highest attainment. James's heroine is actively seeking to fulfill her destiny when she marries Gilbert and, in her generosity, she endows him with the money he needs to fulfill himself. But then the marriage leads her into dark moral territory, and she is nearly overcome by doubts, qualms, even despair. Her final return to Gilbert isn't motivated by her hopes of winning back his love. It's a return to honor because the marriage into which she deliberately entered is where her honor lies. This is a sublime exaltation of the adage, "You made your bed, now lie in it."

Oh blessed dinosaur, Henry James! A modern artist if there ever was one, Jane Campion knows that nobody nowadays lies in the bed he or she has made but hies to Reno and strips the bed. That is why she changes the ending to offer Isabel a chance to find romantic fulfillment.

I have no aesthetic quarrel with this. But Campion evidently had such trouble accounting for Isabel's self-destructive choice of husband that she felt obliged to turn the tremulous but strong young woman into a neurotic suffering from delayed adolescence. And with this I do have a quarrel. To see a strong woman founder, then pull herself free of a moral morass, is dramatic. But to watch a delayed adolescent get nervier and nervier for 150 minutes can be a bore.

The film is done with such art that it keeps boredom at arm's length for most of its running time. But in its final twenty minutes—several scenes of tense talking heads making revelations to one another—I finally learned what I did not wish to learn: that I could not care what happened to Nicole Kidman's, or Jane Campion's, Isabel Archer.

Loved the frame. Hated the portrait. □

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Liberalism's unfinished business

Everything for Sale
The Virtues and Limits of Markets
Robert Kuttner
Alfred A. Knopf, $27.50, 410 pp.

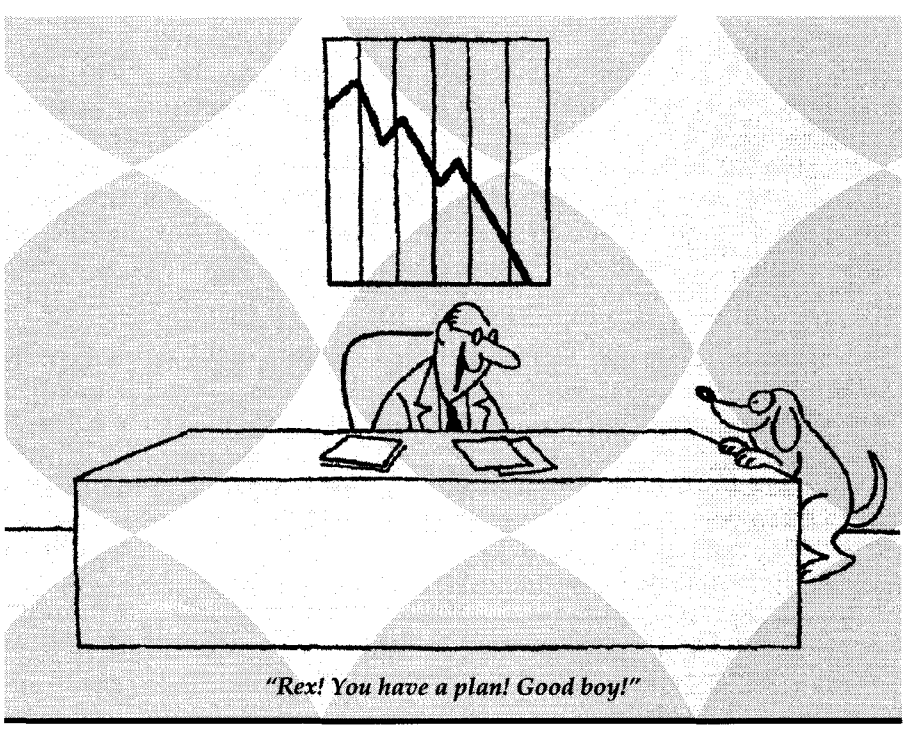
Jay R. Mandle

If all that a rehabilitation of liberalism in this country requires is a devastating critique of *laissez-faire* economics, Robert Kuttner's new book will do the trick. In a series of penetrating discussions concerned with labor markets, health care, financial institutions, and environmental and work-safety issues, Kuttner is merciless in exploring the lack of realism and the illogic underlying the view that markets, left alone, will result in socially optimal outcomes. Economists have long known of market failures. But Kuttner has performed a valuable service in bringing together the profession's scattered insights concerning the weaknesses of unregulated markets. He writes: "In markets where the consumer is not effectively sovereign (telecommunications, public utilities, banking, airlines, pure food and drugs), or where the reliance on market verdicts would lead to socially intolerable outcomes (poor health care or education, pollution, gross inequality of income, the buying of office or purchase of professions), a recourse purely to ineffectual market discipline would leave both consumer and society worse off than the alternative of a mix of market forces and regulatory interventions."

But Kuttner's attack, and others like it, will not be sufficient to reverse the *laissez-faire* tide. For the glorification of the market in our current public discourse represents, at least in large part, a reaction to the failure of government economic policy during the 1970s and early 1980s. Stagnating income among the poor and middle class dates from those years. Without a sharply defined focus of its own centered on restoring income growth among those groups, Kuttner's book reads too much like a call to restore the interventionist policies that have already been found wanting.

The failure of government policy occurred at both the macro- and microeconomic level. Keynesian economics called for the public sector to regulate the demand for goods and services and thereby indirectly affect both prices and employment. But faced with increasing prices for imported oil, it possessed no tools other than raising unemployment to combat the resulting inflation. The recessions of 1973-74 and 1979-80 reflected this incapacity. Furthermore, the botched effort by both the Nixon administration and then later that of Jimmy Carter to manage the petroleum shortages which were created by OPEC provided an additional wedge for those who believed that government should remove itself from the economy.

At the microeconomic level, government regulation in the inflationary context of the 1970s proved to be clumsy and ineffective. As Kuttner explains it with regard to the regulated energy industries, the rate structures of the past had assumed rising use and declining costs. When fuel prices dramatically advanced, pressures were created "both for rate hikes to cover costs and for new rate structures to discourage usage." The upshot was rising prices and decreased demand. These, in turn, generated, as Kuttner puts it, "more political pressure to end the monopoly and allow in competitors, further undermining the old system."



"Rex! You have a plan! Good boy!"

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It is likely that these failures more than anything else have prompted the conservative resurgence in the country. Indeed, it is striking that a good deal of the deregulation which came to be associated with the Reagan administration in fact was initiated during the Carter presidency. And, tellingly, Bill Clinton has shown no inclination to reverse the process. Kuttner points out that the political constituency which supported the initial efforts at deregulation extended on the political Left to include Ralph Nader and Ted Kennedy. Indeed, Kuttner himself, in regretting the abolition of the Civil Aeronautics Board, nevertheless writes that "in fairness the actual CAB (as opposed to an ideal one) may have been corrupted beyond remediation."

What underlay the failures of the interventionist state is that it ignored production. At its root declining rates of labor-productivity growth are the single most important reason that incomes have not grown and inequality has increased during the last twenty years. What this suggests is that what liberalism needs, but Kuttner does not provide, is a supply-side counterpart to demand-side Keynesianism. A buoyant economy still is the best means to alleviate poverty. But rapid noninflationary growth can be achieved only when output per worker grows at a rate much more rapidly than has occurred recently.

Kuttner does take up the issue of long-term growth and invokes the authority of Joseph Schumpeter in support of his argument that competitive markets may not be the best means to promote economic expansion. But though Schumpeter was every bit the dissenter from the orthodoxy about markets on the political Right that Kuttner makes him out to be, it has to be remembered that he was quick to defend income inequality as essential in promoting capitalist development. It is not at all clear how far Kuttner is willing to follow the inegalitarian policy recommendations associated with the Schumpeterian tradition.

For liberalism once again to be attractive it must offer a credible strategy to raise the incomes of the great majority of United States households. But the construction of the production-oriented economics necessary to do so has barely begun. Kuttner is right when he argues that "the grail of a perfect market, purged of illegitimate and inefficient distortions, is a fantasy—and a dangerous one." But he does not seem to realize that, until a credible alternative which utilizes the public sector to help create wealth and to distribute it fairly has been articulated and defended, the politics of the country will continue to be supportive of increased marketization. There is no doubt that, as Kuttner puts it, "the practical task is to determine when regulation improves efficiency, what sort of regulatory strategies to pursue, which regulations take precedence over others, and where is the point of diminishing returns." Depressingly, however, these specific tasks remain overwhelmingly ignored by liberalism. As a result, the hope for its resurgence is bleak. For while the American people may or may not take seriously the more exaggerated claims made on behalf of the market, it is certain that reliance on it is preferable to the policy void currently existing on the political Left. □

Jay R. Mandle *is W. Bradford Wiley professor of economics at Colgate University.*

THUNDERING THURBERBOLTS

Thurber
Writings and Drawings
James Thurber, edited by Garrison Keillor
The Library of America, $35, 1,004 pp.

Nicholas R. Clifford

This past fall, the *Economist* (September 28–October 4, 1996) published an article suggesting that men, having performed their sociobiological function of propagating the race for tens of thousands of years, are now ready to be consigned to the trashbin of history. Not only have they become unnecessary to the species but indeed they are an outright danger, since on the whole they are more violent and less intelligent than women. Thurber, I think, would have taken a gloomy pleasure in that prophecy, for it takes no deconstructionist to catch something of the same fears in his work.

In reading and re-reading the thousand pages of stories, cartoons, and essays that have been selected for the Library of America's volume, it becomes clear once again that gender battles (what would Thurber have made out of our prudish replacement of the word "sex" with "gender," I wonder? Yes, yes, I know there's a difference) occupied a prominent place in his nervous imagination. Men, as he sees them, are going to need all their wiles, all their guile, not to win, but just to stay more or less even. Although they apparently emerge as victors in the cartoon sequence called "The War between Men and Women," it's pretty clear from the last panel that while the female commander may be surrendering her baseball bat to a man, the women have suffered only a tactical defeat and history is on their side. Certainly in "The Masculine Approach" (which, like the "War," is also part of *Men, Women, and Dogs* [1943]), the women are mostly in control, and it's not hard to guess what's going to become of the tiny man who, approaching his enormous house, sees it already being transmuted into the devouring figure of his wife. Nor would I want to put any money on the fortunes of the hippo-like creature who may or may not have done away with Dr. Millmoss, and who is now being upbraided by a woman who may or may not be his wife.

Men, if they are to survive such a world, need either an interior life of fantasy, or an underhanded cleverness. Walter Mitty is, of course, the most famous but by no means the only exam-

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ple of a man who seeks refuge from his life and his wife in another world, where the imagined *pocketa-ta-pocketa* of masculine technology drowns out her chiding. Sometimes the men manage—just barely—to pull off small victories, like Mr. Martin, the meek protagonist of "The Catbird Seat," who succeeds in ousting Mrs. Ulgine Barrows, the efficiency expert his boss has brought in and who now threatens his department. Yet by themselves they're likely to be both impotent and incompetent, and Mr. Preble, the "plump middle-aged lawyer in Scarsdale" who wants to run off with his stenographer, can't even plan his wife's demise (he's going to knock her over the head in the coal cellar) without her insistence that he needs her help to keep from messing it up. Moreover, the laws governing human behavior apply to the animal king(?)dom as well; so, for instance, in "The Amorous Penguin and the Virtuous Mate," a would-be Don Juan finds himself reduced from confident lover to general fix-it handybird by his love object's standoffishness, manifested by her "shy look, and a faint blush as phony as a parrot's laugh."

"Maybe I prefer doing it all wrong!"

Those who know Thurber will find nothing particularly astonishing in these reflections. But what, on the eve of the twenty-first century, will the reader who's new to Thurber make of these pieces? Though not all of them are hu-

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morous by any means ("Whip-poor-will," for example, or "One Is a Wanderer," or "The Evening's at Seven"), most are, and they have a kind of subtlety and understatement that seem out of fashion in an age of electronically amplified laugh tracks and raucously obvious stand-up comics. Garrison Keillor, the editor, has the same kind of gentle and civilized humor himself. The difference is that he plays on the nostalgic memory of a rural America (Lake Wobegon) that perhaps never was, or at least never has been in the experience of most of his radio listeners. Though in his memories of growing up in Columbus, Thurber can show a kind of Keilloresque nostalgia about the Ohio of his childhood, he draws mostly from a world that was very real to his contemporaries, the New York and sometimes the New England of the 1930s and '40s.

The thousand pages here contain many of the best-known essays, fables, short stories, and cartoons. Some might find their own favorites are left out (me, I'd have chosen "What Do You Mean, It *Was* Brillig?"). Still, that's a minor complaint. The complete text of *The Thirteen Clocks* (1950) is here, for example, notable for the Duke of Coffin Castle, who—sounding like someone from our own guilt-free age—exclaims, "We all have flaws, and mine is being wicked" (this, just before being destroyed by the Todal, who "looks like a blob of glup...,makes a sound like rabbits screaming, and smells of old, unopened rooms"). A wonderful series of excerpts from *The Years with Ross* (1958) reminds us of the days when the *New Yorker* was a journal of national importance, rather than the mere reflection of a particular kind of Manhattan buzz it has recently become. And in *Is Sex Necessary?* (1929) and *Let Your Mind Alone* (1937), Thurber takes on the Freudians and the writers of self-help books, who must have been just as loony in the late 1920s and '30s as they are today.

Now that the Library of America has graced Thurber with this edition, is it too much to hope that they might do the same for his contemporary, S.J. Perelman? □

Nicholas R. Clifford's *most recent book is* This House of Memory *(1994).*

THE EPISTLES OF PALS

The Correspondence of Shelby Foote and Walker Percy
Jay Tolson, editor
W. W. Norton, $27.50, 310 pp.

Andrew Santella

In 1931, Walker Percy began his writing career with a stint as gossip columnist for the Greenville (Mississippi) High School *Pica*. His first item was about the "desperate affair" of his best friend, "G.H.S.'s own playboy, Shelby Foote."

The friendship survived Percy's adolescent wisecracks. It survived, in fact, for six decades, until Percy's death in 1990. One of the pleasures of reading the correspondence between Percy and Foote is in seeing these old friends savor success, when it finally comes. Percy matured from high school gossip columnist to National Book Award winner, with *The Moviegoer* in 1961. Foote, Greenville High's "playboy," earned a reputation of another kind with his sprawling and celebrated three-volume *The Civil War: A Narrative*, published between 1958 and 1974. When several of Foote's novels in translation were up for prestigious awards in France, in 1978, Percy wrote to his former colleague in scholastic journalism, "That ain't bad for a *Pica* staffer."

Their letters show each taking almost as much pride in the other's success as in his own. The two argued with, encouraged, and influenced each other by post almost every step of the way. Foote especially seemed to relish his role as mentor. He made the earlier headway as a writer, publishing his first novel, *Tournament*, in 1949. Four more novels followed in the next four years, receiving good reviews, but generating for the most part middling sales. Of that group, *Shiloh* (1952), a fictional recreation of the Civil War battle, was his only popular success. Foote, though, took his relative obscurity as evidence that he was on the right artistic track. Finishing *Shiloh* in 1951, he wrote Percy, "This one does it: I'm among the American writers of all time—got there on the fourth book."

Consistent with this self-ranking, Foote's early letters to his friend took the tone of a master instructing a student. At times, he was breezily harsh, prefacing advice with statements like, "The thing you don't understand (but will when you work harder and come to it yourself) is...." At the same time, Percy was producing two unpublishable novels. It is hard to imagine that the struggling writer was always happy to see another of his more successful friend's didactic letters in his mailbox.

But Foote's advice sometimes did hit the mark. In a 1951 letter he suggested Percy write a novel set in New Orleans. "The main thing is for you to plot it carefully from beginning to end, making it fit a rigid time-scheme: Mardi Gras, for instance, with its climax and the following holy day." This was at least six years before Percy began writing his first published novel, *The Moviegoer*, set in New Orleans at Mardi Gras.

Foote's advice continued even as Percy built a career that established him as a major American novelist. His six novels and two books on philosophy and language received the kind of critical attention that Foote's work never received. Still, Percy remains difficult to classify. His novels are set in the South, but he didn't like to be considered a Southern writer. European writers like Kierkegaard and Camus were enormous influences, but he said that existentialism had become a virtually meaningless

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label. Indeed, Percy told Foote that it was his work in semiotics that would survive in a hundred years. Foote begged off, claiming that "the abstract makes my legs ache and my mind wander." Foote, on the other hand, never let up pushing his lists of recommended reading, especially Proust. When, in 1984, Percy finally gave in and wrote that he would do his assigned reading, Foote was so pleased that his reply is touching to read.

Jay Tolson, editor of the *Wilson Quarterly* and author of *Pilgrim in the Ruins* (1993), a biography of Percy, supplies an introduction that nicely summarizes the lives of the two "brothers in art." His notes on the letters are helpful without being too intrusive. Unfortunately, Tolson was working with a handicap: Foote didn't begin saving Percy's letters until 1970. For the first third of this collection, the reader gets only Foote's words. This is where Tolson's explanatory notes are most valuable, filling in the gaps left by Percy's lost letters. But as disappointing as the loss is, it does give this first section the feel of a dramatic monologue. The reader, hunting Foote's letters for contextual clues to Percy's whereabouts and activities, may be reminded of that writer's 1976 novel *Lancelot*, with its silent, mysterious listener.

Foote's letters, though, are more than engaging enough to carry the load. His good humor shines through, just as it did in his role as commentator in Ken Burns's television documentary on the Civil War. He especially loosened up later in his career, when the accolades he was receiving for his massive war narrative seemed to satisfy his ambition and obviate the need for self-celebration. *The Civil War* had taken Foote twenty years to write and ran over 1.5 million words. He thought it might earn him the National Book Award or a Pulitzer. Though largely ignored by award committees and academic historians, the book was received by some as a landmark achievement, bridging literature and history. Some critics said his achievement rivaled Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. "They call you Gibbon and you know that's silly," he confided. "But if they don't call you Gibbon you get a feeling they're holding back."

Foote is also the more provocative of the two. He needled Percy about his work habits, about his reading, even about his conversion to Catholicism. Percy's faith was a source of real conflict between the two. When Percy told Foote, on a trip to New Mexico in the late 1940s, of his plans to join the church, Foote reportedly responded, "Yours is a mind in full intellectual retreat." Fearing that Percy's faith would impede his growth as a writer, Foote wrote in 1949, "There is something terribly cowardly (at least spiritually) about the risks to which you won't expose your soul. Pushed, you'll admit that doubt is a healthy thing, closely connected with faith; but you won't follow it....

"I seriously think no good practicing Catholic can ever be a great artist; art is by definition a product of doubt."

That their friendship survived challenges like that was probably testament to Percy's strength of character. So are Percy's last letters to Foote. "Dying, if that's what it comes to, is no big thing since I'm ready for it, and prepared for it by the Catholic faith, which I believe," he wrote ten months before his death from cancer. "What is a pain is not even the pain but the nuisance. It is a tremendous bother (and expense) to everybody."

It is reassuring to close this collection with Percy professing the faith that had so deeply informed his career as a writer. And it is reassuring to know that Foote was with Percy at the end, as the two had been with each other in friendship for sixty years. □

Andrew Santella *is a free-lance writer. He lives in Chicago.*

WAITING NO LONGER

Damned to Fame
The Life of Samuel Beckett
James Knowlson
Simon & Schuster, $35, 800 pp.

Celia Wren

Above a darkened stage, a disembodied mouth recites a tale of loss. A blind man drives his servant in harness. A frail couple in nightcaps reminisce from their separate ashcans. Such stark iconography, from the plays of Samuel Beckett, has made the author's name synonymous with nihilism and stoic desperation.

But these images are more than the harvest of a depressed mind, as James Knowlson demonstrates in his masterly biography *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett*. Beckett had a knack for grim comedy, but he was also a scholar and a connoisseur of high culture, particularly European painting, Knowlson points out, and many of the striking apparitions in his work reflect pictures he most admired. Beckett himself confessed that the imagery in *Two Men Contemplating the Moon*, a painting by the German artist Caspar David Friedrich, had furnished the germ of the absurdist masterpiece *Waiting for Godot*. "But there is rarely one simple, single source of inspiration for a literary creation," Knowlson observes, and he goes on to connect *Godot* to paintings by Jack B. Yeats, the writings of philosophers like Kant and Schopenhauer, and the plays of John Millington Synge and August Strindberg, among others.

Knowlson's sleuthing along the trail of inspiration yields some of the most fascinating passages in this dense but moving volume, which is probably the definitive Beckett biography. Knowlson had already spent two decades studying Beckett's works when the recalcitrant Irish writer chose him as biographer. Reassured that a scholar of Knowlson's caliber would not emphasize the life story at the expense of the works, Beckett

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acquiesced to weekly interviews over the course of five months, shortly before his death in 1989. Subsequently, Knowlson was able to track down a number of important new sources, including a detailed diary Beckett kept in the mid-1930s. The result is a meticulously thorough portrait that gives as many insights into the *œuvre* as it does into Beckett's tension-fraught relationships with people and places.

Born in Ireland in 1906, Beckett left the country more or less for good in his twenties, fleeing a culture he found judgmental and claustrophobic. An aggravating factor was his troubled relationship with his devout Protestant mother, who objected to his early writings, though—rather interestingly—she was open minded enough to pay for two years of psychotherapy for him in London. After a sojourn in Germany, largely spent studying paintings, Beckett moved to France, where he remained for the rest of his life, eventually even writing many of his works in French (partially, Knowlson suggests, to escape the oppressive influence of his countryman, James Joyce). During World War II, he joined the Resistance, translating and collating information from field agents, and narrowly escaped arrest with other members of his cell.

After the war he settled in Paris with his longtime companion, Suzanne Deschevaux-Dumesnil, whom he eventually married. He had published several works of fiction, including two volumes of a trilogy in French, when his play *En attendant Godot* (*Waiting for Godot*) launched him to success in 1953. The play provoked puzzlement from audiences and critics, but it was remarkable enough to spread quickly to England and America, where it provoked puzzlement from more audiences and critics ("The Left Bank Can Keep It" was the headline of one review). His reputation increased with *Fin de partie (Endgame)*, *Krapp's Last Tape*, and many shorter plays, some of them for radio; after *Godot*, he usually wrote in French, and did the English translation himself.

As his celebrity grew so did his discomfort with it; Knowlson's title is a quote from Pope's *Dunciad* that Beckett took to citing once fame had become a burden. When he won the Nobel Prize in 1969 his publisher wired him, "In spite of everything, they have given you the Nobel Prize—I advise you to go into hiding." Beckett did. Yet he was capable of reaching out to his admirers: in the 1970s he became a friend and mentor to a former prisoner from San Quentin (from the very beginning Beckett's plays have apparently been a favorite with prisoners), supporting him financially and even agreeing to direct productions of the San Quentin Drama Workshop, whose members were prison alumni.

With anecdotes like these, Knowlson demonstrates that a pessimistic vision did not keep Beckett from trying to make the world a better place. He was effusively charitable—he gave away most of the Nobel Prize money—and championed the politically oppressed, in 1982 contributing the play *Catastrophe*, for example, to a festival supporting the imprisoned Vaclav Havel.

He was equally generous with his time and energy, finding space in his schedule to see friends even when he most wanted to write. And he exerted himself greatly overseeing productions of his plays, fine-tuning performances, and sometimes taking on the role of director. On these occasions he became a perfectionist, insisting that a performer use exactly the right pace or inflection, and even going as far as to bring a metronome to rehearsal. Knowlson astutely relates this scrupulousness to Beckett's artistic eye, noting that, "the attention that Beckett devoted to every element of visual detail of his plays was as minute and painstaking as one of the seventeenth-century Dutch masters that he so much admired."

Beckett's visual imagination was in fact so strong that he sometimes abandoned dialogue altogether: *Act without Words I* and *II*, for example, were written for a mime, and *Quadrat I and II*, conceived for television, feature four dancers dressed in primary colors, processing according to geometrical patterns. Even words were dispensable: his concept of writing, he told Knowlson, lay in the direction of "impoverishment, in lack of knowledge and in taking away, in subtracting rather than in adding."

Ultimately, Knowlson can't really explain how Beckett conceived such a daring project, but the expertise and discernment brought to bear in *Damned to Fame* give us as much insight as we could reasonably expect to get. It is a mark of this biography's achievement that we're left wishing we could meet Beckett and get to know him directly, without the mediation of a book. □

Celia Wren *is a frequent* Commonweal *contributor.*

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JESUITS, FAR OUT

The Sparrow
Maria Doria Russell
Villard Press, $23, 408 pp.

Paul Q. Kane

Among other attributes, a good work of fiction should leave the reader asking questions: questions about who we are and about the world in which we live, questions about faith and the passions which direct our choices. Maria Doria Russell's debut novel, *The Sparrow*, raises such questions through an ingenious and haunting tale of a Jesuit-led expedition to a distant planet, Rakhat, in the twenty-first century.

The story opens in Rome in the year 2059, where the disgraced lone survivor of the Rakhat mission, Emilio Sandoz, is recovering in a hospital under the care of the father general of the Society of Jesus. Sandoz has been accused of heinous crimes and his brother Jesuits, while trying to keep the press at bay, are deciding how to proceed. "He's salvageable," the father general thinks to himself. "It's not as though we have so many priests that we can write one off without an effort....And what right have we to declare the mission a failure?" Thus begins a painstaking endeavor to get Sandoz to explain the events surrounding the reported crimes on Rakhat. As the story unfolds we learn how all of those on the Jesuit missionary expedition had been forced to confront questions of theodicy and agnosticism.

The impetus for the intergalactic journey was the detection, at a Puerto Rican observatory, of beautiful music being broadcast through space. Russell's narrative switches back and forth between Sandoz's return to earth in 2059 and a period forty years earlier when the mission was first conceived. The first transitions between present and past are somewhat jarring and confusing, but as the plot unfolds the mission story draws the reader into the relationships and interior lives of Russell's finely drawn characters.

The author clearly has done her research on the early historic Jesuit missions and on Jesuit spirituality. In the background of all of her Jesuit characters stand Ignatius of Loyola, Matteo Ricci, and Isaac Jogues. She successfully updates the stories of these important Jesuits who made decisions either to send men to distant lands or went themselves to foreign cultures as representatives of Christianity. When Ignatius sent his friend Francis Xavier to India or when Jogues traveled to New France (Canada), it must have seemed as though these men were going to distant planets, uncertain if they would ever set foot back in Europe. Russell's missionary story includes not only four Jesuits, but also a mature married couple, a young scientist, and a Sephardic Jewish woman. By updating the missionary stories of the past, Russell focuses the reader's attention on questions about the nature of missionary work, whether it is conducted by explorers, scientists, business people, or religious. What does it mean to encounter people at least superficially so different from ourselves? What does missionary experience do to our prejudices, desires, and cultural expectations?

An important element in Russell's novel are questions about the sacredness of friendship. In telling conversations and touching moments of intimacy, the Jesuits and their friends work out the possibilities for tenderness, the desire for affection, and the role of celibacy in religious life. "You are not *alone*," one of the characters tells Sandoz near the end of the novel. Unlike characters in many contemporary novels who find themselves ultimately isolated in the world, these men and women continue to reach out to one another despite the uncertainty of God's presence and their own limited ability to communicate with one another.

Russell subtly raises concerns about the ways in which "sophisticated" cultures tell themselves cover stories in order to justify actions taken at a terrible cost to others. The reader first encounters this in the character of Sophia Mendes, who is indentured to a business corporation and must buy her freedom from what she herself describes as an institution of "intellectual prostitution." Her enslavement is seen as a justifiable cost of doing business, and it is only questioned by outsiders. This issue arises again when the missionaries come into contact with the Runa, who are simple, nonviolent beings living in the Rakhat countryside, and the Jana'ata, who are the sophisticated city dwellers who created the beautiful music heard on earth. Ironically, in light of Russell's interest in cross-cultural interaction, one disturbing aspect of the novel is her stereotypical depiction of the Japanese characters, al-

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most all of whom are portrayed as ruthless businessmen.

According to the endnotes, Russell is a trained biological anthropologist who has researched craniofacial biomechanics and also archeological evidence of cannibalism. As one reads her vivid descriptions of the planet Rakhat and its flora, fauna, and rational inhabitants, it is easy to see how Russell brought her expertise to bear on the story. In *The Sparrow* the reader encounters an exotic culture and environment familiar enough to make sense of yet elusive enough to disorient and to enchant. Even when humans venture into space, Russell reminds us, we will continue to struggle with questions of God, the difficulties and ambiguities of human relationships, and the *hubris* that casts the "other" into the outer darkness. □

Paul Q. Kane, S.J., *is co-director of Kateri Northwest Ministry Institute, a ministry training program among native peoples based in Spokane, Washington.*

RELIGION AT WHOLESALE PRICES

Business as a Calling
Work and the Examined Life
Michael Novak
The Free Press, $22.50, 246 pp.

Eugene McCarraher

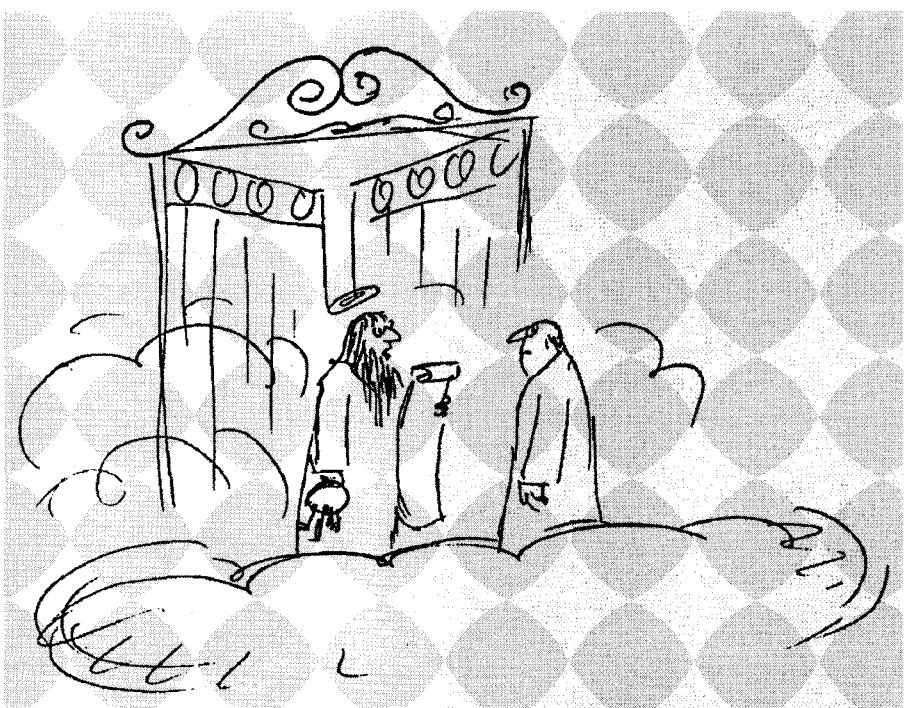
The market "may have its martyrdoms as well as the pulpit, and trade its heroisms as well as war," John Ruskin wrote well over a century ago in *Unto This Last*. Yet Ruskin went on to argue that, by making profit the overriding principle of enterprise, capitalism made martyrdom and heroism impossible. To the contrary, Michael Novak asserts in his new book that capitalism is heroic by its very nature. When properly pursued as a "calling," business opens the gates of heaven to the entrepreneur and may just slide the camel through the needle's eye.

Small enough to be easily portable in briefcases, *Business as a Calling* is a breviary for the information age, complete with anecdotes, adages, success stories, and corporate credos. (Indeed, Novak proudly aligns his book on a shelf of contemporary success literature that contains *The Reflective Executive* and *The Seven Habits of Highly Successful People*.)

Having already christened American capitalism in his previous books, Novak celebrates the wizards of postindustrial affluence—CEO's, chairpersons of the board, managers, and technicians, all of them daring and "creative"—in chapters on business morality, virtue, "corporate responsibility," and philanthropy.

Taking issue both with his usual suspects in the "new class" of academics, journalists, and liberal do-gooders, and with many entrepreneurial partisans, Novak asserts that business involves much more than the accumulation of wealth. The Novakian capitalist is a bold, generous, even saintly pioneer who lives out an "inner vision" and a "sharing of values" with workers, customers, colleagues, and "the world in the largest possible definition." (In fact, Novak writes, businesspeople "remain very close to other ordinary Americans.") Fired by a love of work, determined to improve the world, and emboldened to risk, the businessperson builds community, unlocks creativity, and exhibits a "practical realism" that almost invariably respects the inscrutable ways of Providence. (Businesspeople, Novak contends, are among the most religious elites in America, along with athletes and generals.) The entrepreneur answers a call to uplift the poor, promote human rights, foster civic virtue, and endow cultural institutions. "Capitalism is not solely about the individual. It is about a creative form of community."

Andrew Carnegie serves as Novak's model capitalist. Yes, Novak concedes, Carnegie secretly supported the brutal suppression of the Homestead strike in 1892. But in doing so he flouted every principle of fair dealing and philan-



"Go back and get it. Due to the deficit here, you are allowed to take it with you."

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thropy he had ever espoused, and these, Novak argues, constitute the real core of business life. Citing Carnegie's autobiography and his essay on "Wealth," Novak lauds both the steel baron's lucrative creation of new technologies and enterprises and his "giving it all away" in support of libraries, schools, music halls, and parks.

Always a romantic, Novak once again demonstrates that his romanticism inspires both his virtues and his faults. Reflecting on the union of goodness and beauty called *kalos*, he reminds us that virtue can be aesthetically as well as spiritually graceful. Indeed, Novak recognizes the sacramental character of material reality—a conviction that he rightly argues should inform any Christian approach to the problems of work, technology, and economics.

Yet Novak remains so mesmerized by the achievements and glitter of capitalism that he misses its harsher contradictions and mundane foundations. "Commerce does not require that we have physical or emotional contact with all with whom we do business," he declares. And for good reason: personal contact might acquaint us with some of the appalling practices that sustain our prosperity. As Novak himself admits, Carnegie fled to Scotland rather than watch the Pennsylvania state militia render Homestead safe for philanthropy. Kathy Lee Gifford shed many an outraged tear about Guatemalan sweatshops; Michael Eisner has yet to acknowledge the conditions of Honduran children "creating" Disney products. In both cases, press releases and generous checks papered over business as usual in the underdeveloped world. The testimonies of workers expose the corporate credos cited by Novak for the rhetorical smoke they usually are.

Content to wander in this fog, Novak never interrogates the credos, never ventures outside the executive suite, and thus seems to parrot the ideological lexicon of corporate culture. By casting the firm as a "community," for instance, Novak artfully obscures the power relations inevitably at work. Most Americans who "work in business" are not the shiny, happy people of Novakland; they sit in cubicles, stand at assembly lines, sweat in kitchens, scour toilets, or wait on tables for the low wages and precarious benefits provided by the "creative" types. (And by the way, unionized workers are slightly *more* religious than business elites, even by Novak's dubious standards: look carefully at the chart on page 44.) Indeed, Scott Adams's Dilbert cartoons convey the feel of contemporary work life much more reliably than Novak's virtually company-store populism. Let's pray that people *don't* become the creepily devoted worker-bees idealized in "total quality management" or the folklore of Wal-Mart.

Or take "creativity," another keyword. Anyone acquainted with the history of labor and technology knows that capitalists (like Novak's hero, Carnegie) wrested the power to design and produce goods and services away from artisans and workers and gave it to a small class of professional, technical, and managerial elites. True, inventors and craftsmen often don't possess the organizational skills needed for marketing goods in a modern economy. But Novak's hosannas to "creativity" drown out the noisy historical struggles of ordinary people against the expropriation of their knowledge and skill. "Creativity" has become, not the widespread exercise of craft, but an advertising charm used both to grace such "innovations" as turbo-charged tie racks or to announce "revolutions" in coffee-drinking.

And as for the necessity of "practical realism," there are three points worth making. The first—a banal but still worthwhile point—is that the "realism" of business is that of the ledger book. Second, the "leftish sentiments" of many intellectuals such as Paul Tillich or R. H. Tawney were earned, not at wine and cheese parties, but in direct experience of working-class poverty and imperialist oppression. Third, capitalism depends crucially on the stimulation and commodification of desire and fantasy. Novak can wag his finger all he wants at advertisers who wage "assaults on traditional values." But that ole-time religion doesn't sell beer, cars, or cruise vacations. The true nihilists of our time are not "new class" mandarins but corporate chieftains who beckon us (as their advertising slogans suggest) to break the rules, find your own road, and enjoy a life without limits where you'll be your own rock and know no boundaries.

"Wealth," Ruskin declared, "is the possession of the valuable by the valiant." Capitalism, in Ruskin's view, guaranteed little more than the possession of material abundance by the few. □

Eugene McCarraher *teaches American history at the University of Delaware. He is completing a study of liberal Protestant and Roman Catholic social thought and cultural criticism in the twentieth century.*

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 4)

removing obstacles in the way. Aquinas's five proofs for God's existence were in his theological writings. He insisted that no arguments could convince a mind closed to God's grace, but none were useless because of that.

Neither God nor his grace ever dismisses created nature.

DICK ROLWING
Reynoldsburg, Ohio

The reviewer replies:

I am happy to count myself on the side of God and divine grace in this controversy. Though I am wary of talk about the "purely natural" power of reason, I have no desire to dismiss created nature, break with Catholic tradition, or discount the very significant role that reason, dialogue, and argument can play in a life of faith.

On the contrary, I think the practice of philosophy is crucially important for the integrity of Catholicism today. My reservations about Richard Swinburne's work have rather to do with the way the relationship between talk about God and talk about religion should be understood, as well as with what, in my judgment, an adequate philosophy of religion now requires. Charmed as I am by the phrase "skeptical fideist," and skeptical as I am about the way words like "fideist" and "sectarian" are sometimes used in place of arguments, I don't want to switch chairs on this issue. I welcome the renewed interest in philosophy of religion in all of its variety. I am convinced it helps us to "remove obstacles" and to deepen our understanding of Christian faith. ROBERT J.EGAN, S.J.

Abortion & voting

Peter Feuerherd's claim that "a Catholic case" can be made for a political candidate who embraces the entire abortion-rights agenda, even if the candidate's opponent has a 100-percent prolife voting record, should be seriously questioned. The claim appears in Feuerherd's comment on the Long Island congressional contest between Carolyn McCarthy and Daniel Frisa ["Pulpit Politicking," December 6, 1996].

Specifically, how would Feuerherd reconcile the Holy Father's description of abortion or infanticide as "an unspeakable crime" with his belief that "a Catholic case" could nevertheless be made in the situation I have described?

It should also be noted that Feuerherd was in error when he wrote that Ms. McCarthy had "backed away" from her earlier support of President Bill Clinton's veto of the partial-birth abortion bill. Callers to her office just prior to the election were told that she supported the veto.

THOMAS E. DENNELLY
Baldwin, N.Y.

The writer replies:

1. Mr. Dennelly confuses reporting with advocacy. I noted that a Catholic case could have been made for either candidate in the Frisa-McCarthy campaign. Advocates on the two sides did make such cases. His complaint is actually with the United States bishops, not with me. The bishops have long emphasized that Catholics should make election choices based on a wide array of issues, not just abortion.

2. Carolyn McCarthy backtracked on her views on partial-birth abortion during a WCBS-TV debate with Dan Frisa during the latter stages of the campaign. At that time, she said she would vote to ban the procedure. She later reaffirmed her total prochoice stand.

PETER FEUERHERD

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I DO NOT LOOK JEWISH

Paula Palant

Recently, my wife and I attended a bar mitzvah. We sat next to a couple who, upon hearing that I come from Lvov, Poland, told us about a cousin from the same town who, after World War II, became a nun. They said that "as a child she was taken in by a Polish Christian family and...after the war joined a cloister." I got her name and the address of the convent near Warsaw, and I wrote to her. What follows is from the second letter I received back. I made the translation from the Polish and it is reprinted with permission.

Leon W. Wells [author of Shattered Faith, *Kentucky University Press], Closter, New Jersey*

Thank you for your letter. I am sorry that I do not know English and was happy you wrote in Polish. With pleasure I will answer your questions....

I want to begin by briefly describing my background. I was born in Lvov in 1925 into a family that was partly assimilated. My grandparents on both sides were religious Orthodox Jews. There was even a rabbi in the family. My parents dressed in secular European style and spoke Yiddish to each other. We children—a sister and brother and I—went to Polish school, but the family observed religious holidays. Father prayed every day, attended synagogue each holiday, and mother lit candles every Friday evening. Not one of them survived the war, nor did any of my relatives, except for an old aunt, my mother's sister, who lives in Venezuela; a cousin in Israel; and one in New York. I survived because I do not look typically Jewish. My parents encouraged me to run away to Krakow; the rest of the family was to follow later, using "Aryan papers." They never arrived.

I was arrested but did not admit to being Jewish, and from September 1942 to the end of the war I was in jail as well as in Auschwitz and Ravensbrück.

When I returned to Poland, there was no one left and I was all alone. I was taken in by a good Catholic family and they made it easy for me to finish middle school, and in 1946-47 I studied with the sisters in Niepokalanaka and passed my high school exam. In 1947 I asked to be admitted to the convent, and two years later I was invited to become a part of the family. I have been here as a sister nearly fifty years. I completed studies in physics, and until this day I teach this subject. We have schools for all ages and also teach religion in cities and villages.

I have to straighten out one misunderstanding, as you may possibly not have understood my Polish: I *never* was sorry and still am *not sorry* that I accepted Catholicism. This is my happiness and gives me hope that after my death I will meet my dear ones. Twenty years ago by accident I found some members of my family, and when I wrote to them, my mother's family did not disown me. On the contrary, they forgave me and are keeping in touch. My father's family was silent. They do not want any contact with me. They denied me. This hurts, and for this reason I am careful about making contact. You possibly felt that reticence in my previous letter.

What do the sisters think of me? I do not know! I am sure they know my background. I never hid it, but neither do I discuss it. There are about seventy nuns who live in this house and we are one big family. We range in all ages, the oldest being ninety-seven years old. Many are middle-aged but the majority are young. This is our order's main house and monastic life begins here.

How do I look upon what happened to the Jews in Poland? This is my biggest heartache. I love these people. They are my people, so how could it not hurt me? Why are they so hated? Are they more guilty than other people? *I do not know!* Jews are no worse than other people: They do not sin more than others. Even now people murder each other as in the old times—for reasons of religion. One would not have thought that this could still be possible. People steal from each other, they cheat, and there is always anti-Semitism. I pray to God with all my heart. God is *one* for Jews, Christians, and for all who believe in *him*. We have to forgive each other, and only prayers can change our hearts. But one must begin with oneself.

How do religious people look on what happened to the Jews during the Holocaust? Again, *I don't know*. How could I know? I do know that I fervently believe that God is just and he loves us all. How could I live without this belief? Maybe we sinned to a point where the innocent must suffer? Maybe God wants us as a witness and purifies us as gold in the fire? I do not know! Suffering is a heartbreaking thing, and we must endure it even if we do not comprehend it.

Why did I join the convent and become a nun? No one who did not experience Auschwitz is able to understand what kind of hell it was. Immediately after this hell I found myself in this cloister, able to finish high school in an atmosphere of life, goodness, and love, without concern as to where I came from. I wanted to understand why the sisters were so kind, and why they lived in such a way. That was the reason that I came to be a believer. I always knew that there was a *God* but only *now* I also believe in Christ. This faith is strengthened by the sisters. This is all.

I enclose all the best to you, dear sir, your wife, and your entire family.

Sister Paula Palant

P.S. Are you reading the Bible, the most beautiful book about God and humans? □

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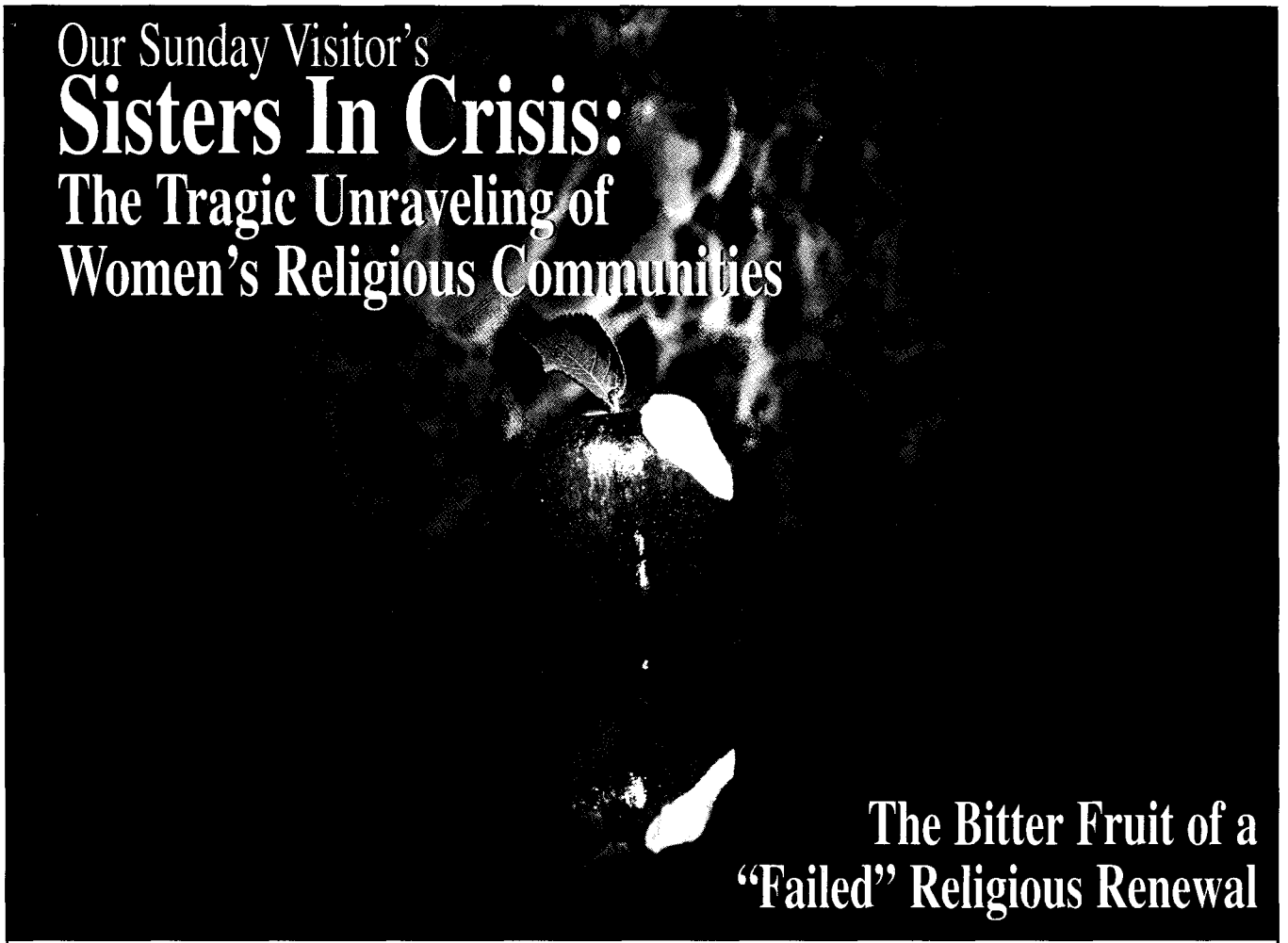

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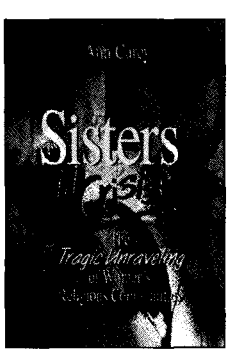

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